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THE DASH DIET



DASH Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

Discover the research-proven way to lower blood pressure through food.

**Virtual, In-Person & Video-on-Demand
Platforms Available**

The DASH diet is a research proven way to control or lower blood pressure through food and lifestyle. This eating plan has also been shown to lower LDL cholesterol and aid with weight loss.

Join this virtual edition and learn foods that contain blood pressure lowering nutrients and foods to avoid.

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DASH Eating Plan

The Benefits: Lowers blood pressure & LDL "bad" cholesterol.



Eat This



Limit This

	Vegetables		Fatty meats
	Fruits		
	Whole grains		Full-fat dairy
	Fat-free or low-fat dairy		
	Fish		Sugar sweetened beverages
	Poultry		
	Beans		Sweets
	Nuts & seeds		
	Vegetable oils		Sodium intake

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/DASH

DASH EATING PLAN

Why the DASH Eating Plan Works

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Scientific studies show that following DASH and eating less sodium can help you lower your blood pressure and LDL cholesterol.

fish



apple



almonds



spinach



sweet potato



yogurt



barley



What you choose to eat affects your chances of developing hypertension, otherwise known as high blood pressure. Blood pressure can be unhealthy even if it stays only slightly above the optimal level of less than 120/80 mmHg. The more your blood pressure rises above normal, the greater the health risk.

Scientists supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) have conducted multiple scientific trials since the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension—or DASH eating plan—was developed more than 20 years ago. Their findings showed that blood pressures were reduced with an eating plan that emphasizes vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and includes fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and healthy oils. It limits foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel, and palm oils. It is also lower in sodium compared to the typical American diet and reduces sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.

The DASH eating plan follows heart healthy guidelines to limit saturated fat and trans fat. It focuses on eating more foods rich in nutrients that can help lower blood pressure—mainly minerals (like potassium, calcium, and magnesium), protein, and fiber. It includes nutrient-rich foods so that it also meets other nutrient requirements as recommended by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

DAILY NUTRIENT LEVELS OF THE ORIGINAL DASH EATING PLAN

Total Fat	27% of calories
Saturated Fat	6% of calories
Protein	18% of calories
Carbohydrate	55% of calories
Sodium	2,300 mg*
Potassium	4,700 mg
Calcium	1,250 mg
Magnesium	500 mg
Cholesterol	150 mg
Fiber	30 g

*Lower sodium to 1,500 mg for further reduction in blood pressure, if needed.

DASH EATING PLAN

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National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

The Science Behind the DASH Eating Plan

The importance of eating more vegetables, fruits, whole grains along with low-fat dairy, poultry, fish, beans, and nuts has been proven in multiple research trials. The combination of the DASH eating plan and reduced sodium creates the biggest benefit, lowering blood pressure significantly.

STUDY 1 Original DASH eating plan

The first DASH trial involved 459 adults with systolic blood pressures of less than 160 mmHg and diastolic pressures of 80–95 mmHg. About 27 percent of the participants had high blood pressure. About 50 percent were women and 60 percent were African Americans. It compared three eating plans: one that included foods similar to what many Americans regularly eat; one that included foods similar to what many Americans regularly eat plus more fruits and vegetables; and the DASH eating plan. All three plans included about 3,000 milligrams of sodium daily. None of the plans were vegetarian or used specialty foods.

Results were dramatic. Participants who followed either the plan that included more fruits and vegetables or the DASH eating plan had reduced blood pressure. But the DASH eating plan had the greatest effect, especially for those with high blood pressure. Furthermore, the blood pressure reductions came fast—within 2 weeks of starting the plan.

STUDY 2 Varied sodium levels

The second DASH trial looked at the effect on blood pressure of a reduced dietary sodium intake as participants followed either the DASH eating plan or an eating plan typical of what

many Americans consume. This trial involved 412 participants. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two eating plans and then followed for a month at each of the three sodium levels. The three sodium levels were: a higher intake of about 3,300 milligrams per day (the level consumed by many Americans), an intermediate intake of about 2,300 milligrams per day, and a lower intake of about 1,500 milligrams per day.

Results showed that reducing dietary sodium lowered blood pressure for both eating plans. At each sodium level, blood pressure was lower on DASH than on the typical American eating plan. The greatest blood pressure reductions were for DASH at the sodium intake of 1,500 milligrams per day. Those with high blood pressure saw the greatest reductions.

STUDY 3 Higher protein or healthy fats

As the science around DASH evolves over time, the overall benefits to heart health continue to be evaluated. The OmniHeart (Optimal Macronutrient Intake Trial for Heart Health) trial studied the effect of replacing some daily carbohydrates—or carbs—with either protein (about half from plant sources) or unsaturated fat. This trial included 164 adults who had systolic

blood pressure readings of 120 to 159 mmHg. The trial compared three dietary patterns, each containing 2,300 mg of sodium per day—the original DASH plan, substituting 10 percent of daily carbs with protein, and substituting 10 percent of total daily carbs with unsaturated fat.

OmniHeart found that participants who followed either variation of DASH, partially substituting carbs with protein (about half from plant sources) or unsaturated fat, had greater reductions in blood pressure and improvements in blood lipid levels than those who followed the original DASH eating plan.

Success with DASH

DASH along with other lifestyle changes can help you prevent and control high blood pressure. In fact, if your blood pressure is not too high, you may be able to control it entirely by changing your eating habits, losing weight if you are overweight, getting regular physical activity, and cutting down on alcohol. **DASH also has other benefits, such as lowering LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, and replacing some carbs with protein or unsaturated fat can have an even greater effect. Along with lowering blood pressure, lower cholesterol can reduce your risk for heart disease.**

DASH EATING PLAN

Getting Started on DASH

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

It's easy to adopt the DASH eating plan. Even small changes made gradually lead to significant benefits. Follow these steps to begin a healthy lifestyle for a lifetime.

kale

kidney beans

blackberries

potato

salmon

1 Assess where you are now.

The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. One way to begin is by using the free, interactive, online [Body Weight Planner \(niddk.nih.gov/bwp\)](https://niddk.nih.gov/bwp) to find out how many calories you need per day to maintain or reach your goal weight. Then fill in the [What's on Your Plate?](#) worksheet for a few days and see how your current food habits compare with the DASH plan. This will help you see what changes you need to make.

2 Discuss medication with your doctor.

If you take medication to control high blood pressure or cholesterol, you should not stop using it. Follow the DASH eating plan and talk with your doctor about your medication treatment as part of an overall plan for wellness.

3 Make DASH a part of your healthy life.

The DASH eating plan along with other lifestyle changes can help you control your blood pressure and lower blood cholesterol. Important lifestyle recommendations include: achieve and maintain a healthy weight, get regular physical activity, and, if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation (up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men).

4 DASH is for everyone in the family.

Start with the meal plans in [A Week With the DASH Eating Plan](#) if you want to follow the menus similar to those used in the DASH trial—then make up your own using your favorite foods. In fact, your entire family can eat meals using the DASH eating plan because it can be adapted to meet varied nutritional needs, food preferences, and dietary requirements.

5 Don't worry.

Remember that on some days the foods you eat may add up to more than the recommended servings from one food group and less from another. Or, you may have too much sodium on a particular day. Just try your best to keep the average of several days close to the DASH eating plan and the sodium level recommended for you.

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National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

DASH EATING PLAN

Tips To Reduce Salt and Sodium

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Studies have found that the DASH eating plan can lower blood pressure in as fast as 2 weeks. Eating less sodium creates even bigger heart healthy benefits.

zucchini

Swiss cheese

bread

Eat your veggies.

Choose plain fresh, frozen, or canned (low-sodium or no-salt-added) vegetables and season them yourself.

Fresh is best.

Choose fresh or frozen skinless poultry, fish, and lean cuts of meat rather than those that are marinated, canned, smoked, brined, or cured.

Go "low or no."

Check the Nutrition Facts labels to compare sodium levels in foods. Choose low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods.

Pay attention to preparation.

Limit cured foods (such as bacon and ham); foods packed in brine (such as pickles, pickled vegetables, olives, and sauerkraut); and condiments (such as mustard, horseradish, ketchup, and barbecue sauce). Limit even lower sodium versions of soy sauce and teriyaki sauce, which should be used as sparingly as table salt.

Subtract, don't add.

Canned foods such as tuna and beans can be rinsed to remove some of the sodium. Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.

Limit salty processed foods.

Skip or limit frozen dinners and mixed dishes such as pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings, which often have a lot of sodium. Prepare and eat more foods at home, where you can control how much sodium is added.

Spice it up.

Boost flavor with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends instead of salt or salty seasonings like soy sauce, spice blends, or soup mixes. Start by cutting salt in half and work your way toward healthy substitutes.

EASY TIPS FOR DINING OUT

Move the salt shaker away.

This simple first step could become second nature.

Research the restaurant's menu before going out.

Check online nutrition information and then avoid these on the menu: pickled, cured, smoked, soy sauce.

Make special requests.

Ask that your meal be prepared without added salt, MSG, or salty ingredients such as bacon, pickles, olives, and cheese.

Easy does it on the condiments.

A little goes a long way for mustard, ketchup, horseradish, pickles, and sauces with salt-containing ingredients.

Go for healthy appetizers and side dishes.

Choose fruit or vegetables instead of salty snacks, chips, or fries.

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National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Where's the sodium?



brown rice

green beans

strawberries

black-eyed peas

milk

tuna

Most of the sodium we eat comes from added salt in packaged or prepared foods. Only a small amount occurs naturally in foods. Check Nutrition Facts labels and choose foods with lower sodium levels.

Grains		Serving Size	Milligrams of Sodium
Cooked cereal, rice, pasta (unsalted)	½ cup	0–15	
Ready-to-eat packaged cereal	½ cup	0–360	
Bread	1 slice	120–210	
Vegetables			
Fresh or frozen, cooked without salt	½ cup	0–70	
Canned or frozen with sauce	½ cup	190–430	
Pasta sauce, jarred	½ cup	270–490	
Fruits			
Fresh, frozen, canned	½ cup	0–5	
Dairy			
Milk	1 cup	110	
Yogurt	1 cup	85–190	
Natural cheeses	1 ½ oz	90–480	
American cheese, processed	1 slice	200–240	
Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes			
Nuts, unsalted	⅓ cup	0–5	
Nuts, salted	⅓ cup	70–260	
Beans, cooked from dried or frozen (unsalted)	½ cup	0–10	
Beans, canned	½ cup	130–450	
Meats, Fish, and Poultry			
Fresh or frozen meat, fish, poultry	3 oz	55–75	
Fresh or frozen poultry, with broth	3 oz	100–170	
Tuna, canned, water pack	3 oz	140–180	
Turkey breast, lunch meat	3 oz	540–810	
Ham, lean, roasted	3 oz	920–950	

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