

DASH “Diet”

Healthy Eating To Lower Your Blood Pressure

The DASH diet emphasizes portion size, eating a variety of foods, and getting the right amount of nutrients. DASH -stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension- and could lower your blood pressure by a few points in just two weeks. If adopted early and combined with other lifestyle changes, such as exercising regularly and not smoking, the DASH diet can prevent high blood pressure (hypertension).

What to eat

The key to this diet is incorporating a variety of foods, including lots of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean meat, and low-fat dairy products. The DASH diet is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, total fat, and sodium; yet rich in protein, fiber, and other healthy nutrients.

Tips on incorporating the food groups into your meals

Food group	Servings	Serving Sizes
Whole grains	6-8 a day	1 slice of bread or ½ cup cooked rice
Fruits & vegetables	8-10 a day	1 cup of raw veggies, 1 medium piece of fruit, ½ cup canned fruit
Fat-free or low-fat dairy	2-3 a day	1 cup of milk or 1 ½ oz. cheese
Lean meats	6 or fewer a day	1 oz. cooked meats
Nuts, seeds, and beans	4-5 a week	1/3 cup nuts, 2 tbsp. peanut butter, ½ cup beans
Fats & oils	2-3 a day	1 tsp. margarine, 1 tsp. vegetable oil, 2 tbsp. dressing, 1 tbsp. mayo
Sweets	5 or fewer a week	1 tbsp. sugar/jelly, ½ cup sorbet
Sodium	1,500 to 2,400 mg a day (the less sodium, the greater effect on lowering blood pressure)	1,500 mg of sodium equals about 4 grams, or 2/3 tsp., of table salt

Adding minerals to your diet

The mix of potassium, calcium, and magnesium in the DASH diet act as a diuretic; helping the body excrete salt.

- **Potassium:** Balances the amount of sodium in your cells. It is found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and dairy products.
- **Calcium:** Eating too little is linked with high blood pressure. It is found in dairy products, green leafy vegetables, fish with edible bones, and calcium-fortified foods.
- **Magnesium:** Deficiency linked with higher blood pressure. It is found in legumes, green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds, whole grains, and lean meats.

For more information, contact:

Julie Chobdee, MPH, Wellness Program Coordinator at Julie.Chobdee@ucr.edu or x2-1488.

Cutting Back On Sodium

- Add spices or flavorings to your food instead of salt. For instance, season broccoli with lemon juice or oregano and popcorn with curry or garlic powder. Try salt-free seasoning blends.
- Do not add salt when cooking rice, pasta or hot cereal.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna, to remove some sodium.

Putting it all together

Use the DASH food group as a guide to build your recommended daily servings of each food group in your menu planning. This diet is based on a 2,100 calorie meal plan and you may need to adjust the serving goals based on your health or individual circumstances. If you need more help creating menus talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian.

The following are a few strategies to help you get started on the DASH diet:

- **Change gradually** — Too often people try to change everything at once when they are seeking a healthier lifestyle and this can be very difficult to maintain. Instead, change one or two things at a time. For example if you only eat 1-2 servings of fruits and vegetables a day try adding a serving at lunch and a serving at dinner; or eat a piece of fruit for a snack rather than chips, cookies, etc..
- **Forgive yourself if you backslide** — Everyone slips, especially when learning something new. Remember that changing your lifestyle is a long-term process. Find out what triggered your setback and pick up from where you left off.
- **Add physical activity** — To boost your blood pressure lowering even more increase your physical activity to a recommended 30 minutes a day; in addition to following the DASH diet.
- **Reward successes** — Reward yourself with a non-food treat for your accomplishments.
- **Get support** — Making a lifestyle change can be difficult, find a friend to do it with you and ask them to keep you accountable or talk with your doctor or dietician.

Additional Resources

- Search a database from the [American Heart Association's Delicious Decisions](#) for healthy recipes for appetizers to desserts and everything in between!
- Find out [Why Processed Foods Contain so Much Sodium](#)
- You can control high blood pressure without medication with these [10 Helpful Lifestyle Changes](#).
- Visit the American Heart Association to get the latest [Blood Pressure News](#).
- Test your knowledge about [Blood Pressure](#)