

IN BRIEF:

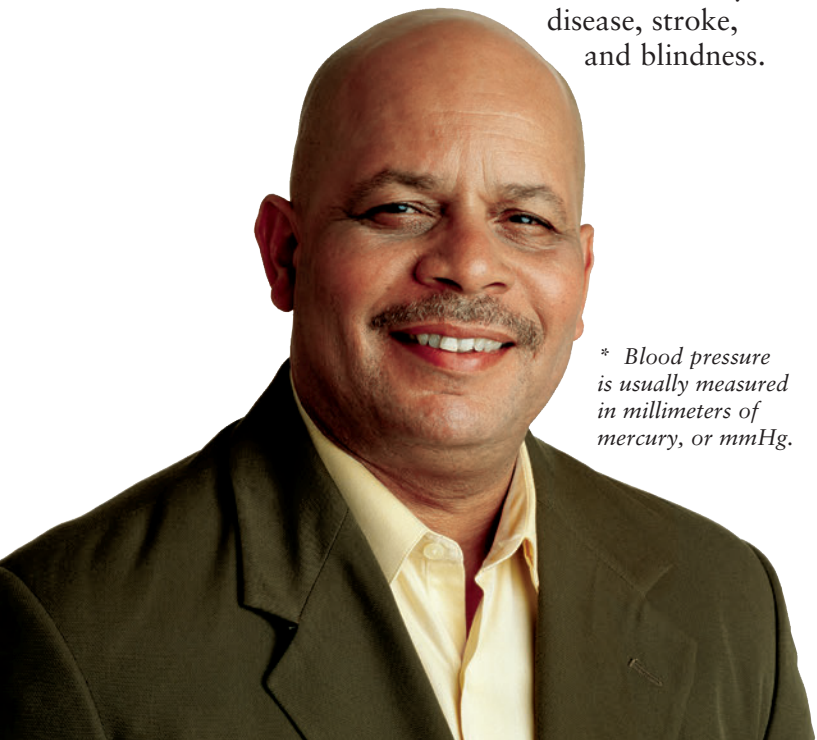


# Your Guide To Lowering Your Blood Pressure With DASH



What you eat affects your chances of developing high blood pressure (hypertension). Research shows that high blood pressure can be prevented—and lowered—by following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, which includes eating less sodium.

High blood pressure is blood pressure higher than 140/90 mmHg\*, and prehypertension is blood pressure between 120/80 and 139/89 mmHg. High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes your heart work too hard, hardens the walls of your arteries, and can cause the brain to hemorrhage or the kidneys to function poorly or not at all. If not controlled, high blood pressure can lead to heart and kidney disease, stroke, and blindness.



\* Blood pressure is usually measured in millimeters of mercury, or mmHg.

But high blood pressure can be prevented—and lowered—if you take these steps:

- Follow a healthy eating plan, such as DASH, that includes foods lower in sodium.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be moderately physically active for at least 2 hours and 30 minutes per week.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

If you already have high blood pressure and your doctor has prescribed medicine, take your medicine, as directed, and follow these steps.

## The DASH Eating Plan

The DASH eating plan is rich in fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, whole grains, fish, poultry, beans, seeds, and nuts. It also contains less sodium; sweets, added sugars, and beverages containing sugar; fats; and red meats than the typical American diet. This heart-healthy way of eating is also lower in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol and rich in nutrients that are associated with lowering blood pressure—mainly potassium, magnesium, calcium, protein, and fiber.



National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

## How Do I Make the DASH?

The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. It simply calls for a certain number of daily servings from various food groups.

The number of servings depends on the number of calories you're allowed each day. Your calorie level depends on your age and, especially, how active you are. Think of this as an energy balance system—if you want to maintain your current weight, you should take in only as many calories as you burn by being physically active. If you need to lose weight, eat fewer calories than you burn or increase your activity level to burn more calories than you eat.

What is your physical activity level? Are you mostly:

- Sedentary? You do only light physical activity that is part of your typical day-to-day routine.
- Moderately active? You do physical activity equal to walking about 1 to 3 miles a day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, plus light physical activity.
- Active? You do physical activity equal to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, plus light physical activity.

Use the chart below to estimate your daily calorie needs.

## Your Daily Calorie Needs

| Gender | Age (years) | Calories Needed for Each Activity Level |                   |             |
|--------|-------------|---|-------------------|-------------|
|        |             | Sedentary                               | Moderately Active | Active      |
| Female | 19–30       | 2,000                                   | 2,000–2,200       | 2,400       |
|        | 31–50       | 1,800                                   | 2,000             | 2,200       |
|        | 51+         | 1,600                                   | 1,800             | 2,000–2,200 |
| Male   | 19–30       | 2,400                                   | 2,600–2,800       | 3,000       |
|        | 31–50       | 2,200                                   | 2,400–2,600       | 2,800–3,000 |
|        | 51+         | 2,000                                   | 2,200–2,400       | 2,400–2,800 |

Now that you know how many calories you're allowed each day, find the closest calorie level to yours in the chart on page 3 called “Following the DASH Eating Plan.” This shows roughly the number of servings from each food group that you can eat each day.

Next, compare DASH with your current eating pattern. Fill in the “What’s on Your Plate and How Much Are You Moving?” chart on page 4 for 1 or 2 days to compare what you usually eat with the DASH eating plan—and note how active you are. This should help you decide what changes you need to make in your food choices—and in the sizes of the portions you eat.

“A Day With the DASH Eating Plan” on page 6 shows a sample menu based on about 2,000 calories a day. Increase or decrease the serving sizes for your own calorie level. This chart also shows the two levels of sodium, 2,300 and 1,500 milligrams (mg), that DASH allows each day. Because fruits and vegetables are naturally lower in sodium than many other foods, DASH makes it easier to eat less sodium. Try it at the 2,300 mg level (about 1 teaspoon of table salt). Then, talk to your doctor about gradually lowering it to 1,500 mg a day. Keep in mind: The less sodium you eat, the more you may be able to lower your blood pressure.

Choose and prepare foods with less sodium and salt, and don't bring the salt shaker to the table. Be creative—try herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, wine, and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table. And, because most of the sodium that we eat comes from processed foods, be sure to read food labels to check the amount of sodium in different food products. Aim for foods that contain 5 percent or less of the Daily Value of sodium. Foods with 20 percent or more Daily Value of sodium are considered high. These include baked goods, certain cereals, soy sauce, and some antacids—the range is wide.

## DASH Tips for Gradual Change

Make these changes over a couple of days or weeks to give yourself a chance to adjust and make them part of your daily routine:

- Add a serving of vegetables at lunch one day and dinner the next, and add fruit at one meal or as a snack.
- Increase your use of fat-free and low-fat milk products to three servings a day.
- Limit lean meats to 6 ounces a day—3 ounces a meal, which is about the size of a deck of cards. If you usually eat large portions of meats, cut them back over a couple of days—by half or a third at each meal.
- Include two or more vegetarian-style, or meatless, meals each week.

# Following the DASH Eating Plan

Use this chart to help you plan your menus—or take it with you when you go to the store.

| Food Group  | Servings Per Day |                    |                | Serving Sizes  | Examples and Notes   | Significance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Plan                              |
|---|------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|--|--|
|   | 1,600 Calories   | 2,000 Calories     | 2,600 Calories |  |  |  |
| <b>Grains*</b>                                    | 6                | 6–8                | 10–11          | 1 slice bread<br>1 oz dry cereal†<br>½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal   | Whole wheat bread and rolls, whole wheat pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn    | Major sources of energy and fiber  |
| <b>Vegetables</b>                                 | 3–4              | 4–5                | 5–6            | 1 cup raw leafy vegetable<br>½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable<br>½ cup vegetable juice                       | Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes                              | Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber                                      |
| <b>Fruits</b>                                     | 4                | 4–5                | 5–6            | 1 medium fruit<br>¼ cup dried fruit<br>½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit<br>½ cup fruit juice                 | Apples, apricots, bananas, dates, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, mangoes, melons, peaches, pineapples, raisins, strawberries, tangerines | Important sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber                                 |
| <b>Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products</b> | 2–3              | 2–3                | 3              | 1 cup milk or yogurt<br>1½ oz cheese   | Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or buttermilk; fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese; fat-free or low-fat regular or frozen yogurt               | Major sources of calcium and protein   |
| <b>Lean meats, poultry, and fish</b>              | 3–6              | 6 or less          | 6              | 1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish<br>1 egg‡  | Select only lean meats; trim away visible fat; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry  | Rich sources of protein and magnesium  |
| <b>Nuts, seeds, and legumes</b>                   | 3 per week       | 4–5 per week       | 1              | ½ cup or 1½ oz nuts<br>2 Tbsp peanut butter<br>2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds<br>½ cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas) | Almonds, hazelnuts, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, kidney beans, lentils, split peas                                      | Rich sources of energy, magnesium, protein, and fiber                                |
| <b>Fats and oils§</b>                             | 2                | 2–3                | 3              | 1 tsp soft margarine<br>1 tsp vegetable oil<br>1 Tbsp mayonnaise<br>2 Tbsp salad dressing                        | Soft margarine, vegetable oil (such as canola, corn, olive, or safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing                                      | The DASH study had 27 percent of calories as fat, including fat in or added to foods |
| <b>Sweets and added sugars</b>                    | 0                | 5 or less per week | ≤2             | 1 Tbsp sugar<br>1 Tbsp jelly or jam<br>½ cup sorbet, gelatin<br>1 cup lemonade                                   | Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup, sorbet and ices, sugar  | Sweets should be low in fat  |

\* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

† Serving sizes vary between ½ cup and 1¼ cups, depending on cereal type. Check the product's Nutrition Facts label.

‡ Because eggs are high in cholesterol, limit egg yolk intake to no more than four per week; two egg whites have the same protein content as 1 oz of meat.

§ Fat content changes serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp of regular salad dressing equals one serving; 1 Tbsp of a low-fat dressing equals one-half serving; 1 Tbsp of a fat-free dressing equals zero servings.

Abbreviations: oz = ounce; Tbsp = tablespoon; tsp = teaspoon

# What's on Your Plate and How Much Are You Moving?

Use this form to track your food and physical activity habits before you start on the DASH eating plan or to see how you're doing after a few weeks. To record more than 1 day, just copy the form. Total each day's food groups and compare what you ate with the DASH eating plan at your calorie level.

| Date:  |                       |                                 | Number of Servings by DASH Food Group |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Food   | Amount (serving size) | Sodium (mg)                     | Grains                                | Vegetables                   | Fruits            | Milk products     | Meats, fish, and poultry   | Nuts, seeds, and legumes | Fats and oils     | Sweets and added sugars     |
| Example:<br>whole wheat bread, with soft (tub) margarine   | 2 slices<br>2 tsp     | 299<br>52                       | 2                                     |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          | 2                 |                             |
| <b>Breakfast</b>   |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| <b>Lunch</b>   |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| <b>Dinner</b>  |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| <b>Snacks</b>  |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| <b>Day's Totals</b>  |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| 2,000 calorie-level example:<br>Compare yours with the DASH eating plan at your calorie level.   |                       | 2,300 or<br>1,500 mg<br>per day | 6-8<br>per<br>day                     | 4-5<br>per<br>day            | 4-5<br>per<br>day | 2-3<br>per<br>day | 6 or<br>less<br>per<br>day | 4-5<br>per<br>week       | 2-3<br>per<br>day | 5 or<br>less<br>per<br>week |
| Enter your calorie level and servings per day:   |                       |                                 |                                       |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| <b>Physical Activity Log</b><br>Aim for at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week. When your heart is beating noticeably faster, the activity is probably moderately intense. |                       |                                 | 30 min<br>5 min                       | Moderate walking<br>Cleaning |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |
| Record your minutes per day for each activity:   |                       | Time:                           | Type of activity:                     |                              |                   |                   |                            |                          |                   |                             |

- Increase servings of vegetables, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and cooked dry beans. Try casseroles and stir-fry dishes, which have less meat and more vegetables, grains, and dry beans.
- For snacks and desserts, use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and calories—for example, unsalted rice cakes; unsalted nuts or seeds; raisins; graham crackers; fat-free, low-fat, or frozen yogurt; popcorn with no salt or butter added; or raw vegetables.
- Use fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables and fruits.

## DASH Hints

- Be aware that the DASH eating plan has more servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods than you may be used to eating. These foods are high in fiber and may cause some bloating and diarrhea. To avoid these problems, gradually increase the amount of fruit, vegetables, and whole grain foods that you eat over several weeks.
- If you have trouble digesting milk products, try taking lactase-enzyme pills (available at drug stores and groceries) with milk products. Or buy lactose-free milk, which includes the lactase enzyme.
- If you don't like or are allergic to nuts, use seeds or legumes (cooked dried beans or peas).
- If you take medicines to control your high blood pressure, keep taking them. But tell your doctor that you are now eating the DASH way.

## Other Lifestyle Changes

Making other lifestyle changes while following the DASH eating plan is the best way to prevent and control high blood pressure.

**Lose Weight, If Necessary, While Following DASH**  
DASH is rich in lower-calorie foods, such as fruits and vegetables, so it easily can be changed to support weight loss. You can reduce calories even more by replacing higher calorie foods, such as sweets, with more fruits and vegetables. The best way to take off pounds is to do it slowly, over time, by getting more physical activity and eating fewer calories. To develop a weight-loss or weight-maintenance program that's tailored for you, talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian.

## Be Physically Active While Following the DASH Eating Plan

Combining DASH with a regular physical activity program, such as walking or swimming, will help you shed pounds and stay trim for the long term. Start with a simple 15-minute walk during your favorite time of day, and gradually increase the amount of time you are active. You can do an activity for 30 minutes at one time, or choose shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. The important thing is to total at least 2 hours and 30 minutes per week of activities at a moderate intensity level. For more health benefits, gradually increase to 5 hours per week.

## Make the DASH for Life

DASH can help you prevent and control high blood pressure. It also can help you lose weight, if you need to. It meets your nutritional needs and has other health benefits for your heart. So get started today, and make the DASH for a healthy life.

## To Learn More

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) for information on heart disease and heart health.

NHLBI Health Information Center  
P.O. Box 30105  
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105  
Phone: 301-592-8573  
TTY: 240-629-3255  
Fax: 301-592-8563

Also check out these heart health resources:

NHLBI Website: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

“Aim for a Healthy Weight”: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/index.htm)

DASH Health Topic: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash>

“Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010”: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

NHLBI Delicious Heart Healthy Recipes: <https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

# A Day With the DASH Eating Plan

| 2,300 mg Sodium (Na) Menu  | Substitution to Reduce Sodium to 1,500 mg       |
|--|---|
| <b>Breakfast</b><br>½ cup instant oatmeal<br>1 mini whole wheat bagel:<br>1 Tbsp peanut butter<br>1 medium banana<br>1 cup low-fat milk  | ½ cup regular oatmeal with 1 tsp cinnamon       |
| <b>Lunch</b><br>Chicken breast sandwich:<br>2 slices (3 oz) chicken breast, skinless<br>2 slices whole wheat bread<br>1 slice (¾ oz) natural cheddar cheese, reduced-fat<br>1 large leaf romaine lettuce<br>2 slices tomato<br>1 Tbsp low-fat mayonnaise<br>1 cup cantaloupe chunks<br>1 cup apple juice                               | 1 slice (¾ oz) natural Swiss cheese, low-sodium |
| <b>Dinner</b><br>1 cup cooked spaghetti:<br>¾ cup low-salt vegetarian spaghetti sauce<br>3 Tbsp Parmesan cheese<br>Spinach salad:<br>1 cup fresh spinach leaves<br>¼ cup fresh carrots, grated<br>¼ cup fresh mushrooms, sliced<br>1 Tbsp vinegar and oil dressing<br>½ cup corn, cooked from frozen<br>½ cup canned pears, juice pack |   |
| <b>Snacks</b><br>½ cup almonds, unsalted<br>¼ cup dried apricots<br>1 cup fruit yogurt, fat-free, no sugar added   |   |

| Nutrients Per Day           | 2,300 mg | 1,500 mg |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Calories                    | 2,027    | 2,078    |
| Total fat                   | 64 g     | 68 g     |
| Calories from fat           | 28%      | 30%      |
| Saturated fat               | 13 g     | 16 g     |
| Calories from saturated fat | 6%       | 7%       |
| Cholesterol                 | 114 mg   | 129 mg   |
| Sodium                      | 2,035 mg | 1,560 mg |
| Calcium                     | 1,370 mg | 1,334 mg |
| Magnesium                   | 535 mg   | 542 mg   |
| Potassium                   | 4,715 mg | 4,721 mg |
| Fiber                       | 34 g     | 34 g     |

Abbreviations: mg = milligram; Tbsp = tablespoon;  
tsp = teaspoon; oz = ounce; g = gram



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