



The DASH Diet

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension research demonstrated that high blood pressure (or hypertension) can be significantly reduced by a healthy eating plan. This eating plan is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods. It also focuses on reducing salt and sodium intake. This handout offers tips on how to start and stay on this healthy eating plan, gives you an idea of the types of food emphasized in the DASH diet, and provides tips to reduce your salt and sodium intake.

The added benefit of this program is that it is a heart healthy plan that all can follow!

GETTING STARTED

Change gradually.

† Keep fruits and vegetables on hand. Use frozen, canned, or dried if they are more convenient than fresh. Try ready-to-eat items – pre-peeled carrots, pre-washed salad mix, individual-sized cans of fruit.

† If you now eat one or two vegetables a day, add a serving at lunch and another at dinner to reach 4-5 servings per day. If you don't eat fruit now or only have juice at breakfast, add a serving to your meals or have fruit for a snack.

† Gradually increase your use of fat free and low fat dairy products to three servings a day. For example, drink milk with lunch or dinner, instead of soda, sugar-sweetened tea, or alcohol. Choose low fat (1%) or fat free (skim) milk to reduce your intake of saturated fat, total fat, cholesterol and calories.

† Read food labels on margarines and salad dressings to choose those lowest in saturated fat.

Treat meat as one part of the whole meal, instead of the focus.

† Limit meat to 6 ounces a day (2 servings) – three to four ounces is about the size of a deck of cards. If you are eating more than this, cut the amount of meat gradually-by half or a third at each meal.

† Include two or more vegetarian-style (meatless) meals each week.

† Increase servings of fruit and vegetables, whole grain rice, pasta and dry beans in meals to get full without lots of meat. Try casseroles and pasta, stir-fry dishes, which have less meat and more vegetables, grains and dry beans.

Use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories as desserts and snacks.

† Fruits and other low fat foods offer great taste and variety. Use fruits canned in their own juice. Fresh fruits require little or no preparation. Dried fruits are a good choice to carry with you.

† Try these snack ideas: unsalted pretzels or nuts mixed with raisins; a fruit smoothie made by blending plain low-fat yogurt and fruit; popcorn with no salt or butter added; and raw vegetables.

TIPS TO REDUCE



? Add no salt at the table and use half the usual amount (or less) when cooking.

? Buy fresh, plain frozen or vegetables canned with “no added salt”.

? Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meats, rather than canned, smoked, or processed types.

? Limit cured foods (such as bacon or ham), foods packed in brine (such as pickles, olives, and sauerkraut), and condiments (such as MSG, mustard, horseradish, catsup, and barbecue sauce).

? Be spicy instead of salty. In cooking and at the table, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends.

? Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.

? Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, and canned soups and broths, or use the reduced sodium varieties.

? When eating out, order foods without sauces and ask that no salt, soy sauce, or other sodium containing seasonings be used in preparation.

Remember! High blood pressure can be controlled if you take these steps: maintain a healthy weight; participate in regular physical activity; follow a healthy eating plan, which includes foods lower in salt and sodium; if you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation; and, if you have high blood pressure and are prescribed medication, take it as directed.

FOLLOWING THE DASH DIET

The DASH eating plan shown below is based on 2,000 calories per day. The number of daily servings in a food group may vary from those listed depending on your calorie needs. Aim to keep sodium intake less than 2400 milligrams per day. Use this chart to help you plan your menus, or take it with you when you go to the store.

FOOD GROUP	DAILY SERVINGS (except as noted)	SERVING SIZES	EXAMPLES AND NOTES	SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH FOOD GROUP
Grains & grain Products	7-8	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal* ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal	whole wheat bread, pita bread, bagel, grits, cereals, oatmeal, crackers unsalted pretzels	major sources of energy and fiber
Vegetables	4-5	1c raw leafy or ½ c cooked vegetables 6 oz vegetable juice	tomatoes, carrots, green squash, broccoli, turnip greens, spinach, green beans	rich sources of potassium, fiber and magnesium
Fruits	4-5	1 medium fruit ¼ c dried fruit ½ c fresh, frozen, 6 oz fruit juice	apricots, bananas, dates, oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, mangoes, peaches, pineapples	rich sources of potassium, fiber and magnesium
Lowfat or fat free dairy foods	2-3	8 oz milk 1 cup yogurt 1 ½ oz cheese	skim or lowfat (1%) milk, fat free or lowfat buttermilk, fat free or lowfat yogurt, lowfat and fat free cheese	major sources of calcium and protein
Meats, poultry, and fish	2 or less	3 oz cooked meats, poultry and fish	select only lean; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or boil, instead of frying; remove skin from poultry	rich sources of protein and magnesium
Nuts, seeds, and dry beans	4-5 per week	1/3 cup or 1 ½ oz nuts; 2 T or ½ oz seeds, ½ c cooked dry beans	almonds, filberts, mixed nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, lentils, peas	rich sources of energy, protein, potassium, fiber, and magnesium
Fats and oils**	2-3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 T lowfat mayonnaise, 2 T light salad dressing, 1 tsp vegetable oil	soft margarine, lowfat mayonnaise, light salad dressing, vegetable oil (such as olive, canola, corn, or safflower)	DASH has 27% of calories as fat, including that in or added to foods
Sweets	5 per week	1 T sugar 1 T jelly or jam ½ oz jelly beans 8 oz lemonade	maple syrup, sugar, jelly, jam, fruit-flavored gelatin, jelly beans, hard candy, fruit punch, sorbet, ices	sweets should be low in fat

?? * Equals ½-1 ¼ cup, depending on cereal type. Check the product's nutrition label

?? **Fat content changes serving counts for fats and oils: For example, 1 T of regular salad dressing equals 1 serving; 1 T of lowfat dressing equals ½ serving; 1 T of a fat free dressing equals 0 servings.

To learn more about high blood pressure, contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm> or call 1-800-575-WELL.