

DASH: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

Lower your blood pressure with the DASH Diet

What is the DASH Diet?

The DASH diet is a way of eating that was designed to lower blood pressure and boost heart health.

DASH Eating Plan is high in these types of foods:

- Vegetables
- Lean proteins
- Nuts and seeds
- Whole grains
- Low fat dairy
- Legumes

The above foods are great sources of the nutrients that can help to lower blood pressure such as potassium, magnesium, calcium, protein and fiber!

And lower in these foods:

- Sodium
- Saturated and trans fats
- Added sugars

Sodium

Sodium acts to pull water into the bloodstream thereby increasing the volume of blood in the vessel. When there is more volume in the blood vessel this increases the pressure required to move that volume through. The end result is higher blood pressure.

Recommended intake for sodium is no more than 2300 mg daily unless you have high BP or at risk for hypertension then it is no more than 1500 mg daily.

1 teaspoon of salt is about 2300 mg of sodium.

Foods typically high in sodium:

- Salt
- Cheese
- Deli meats
- Bread
- Cured meats such as jerky, smoked fish, smoked meats, sausage

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Following the DASH Diet might look like this:

| Food Group | Servings per Day 2000 Calorie Diet | Servings per Day 2600 Calorie Diet | Serving Size | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Grains Choose mostly whole grains | 6-8 | 10-11 | 1 slice of bread 1 oz dry cereal ½ cup cooked grains or pasta | Whole grains are great sources of fiber and vitamins |
| Vegetables | 4-5 | 5-6 | 1 cup raw leafy veggies ½ cup cut up raw or cooked veggies | Veggies are rich in fiber, potassium and magnesium |
| Fruits | 4-5 | 5-6 | 1 medium fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit | Fruits are rich in potassium, magnesium and contain fiber |
| Fat free or low fat dairy | 2-3 | 3 | 1 cup milk or yogurt 1 ½ oz of cheese | Dairy provides calcium and protein |
| Lean meats, poultry, fish | 6 or less | 6 | 1 oz cooked meats, poultry or fish 1 egg | Great source of protein and magnesium |
| Nuts, seeds, legumes | 4-5 per week | 1 | ⅓ cup or 1 ½ oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp of seeds ½ cup of cooked legumes | Rich in healthy fats, protein, fiber and magnesium |
| Fats and oils | 2-3 | 3 | 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp salad dressing | Choose unsaturated fats over saturated fats |
| Sweets and sugars | 5 or less/week | 2 or less/day | 1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jam/jelly ½ cup sorbet, gelatin | |

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Tips for getting started with DASH:

- Start adding in vegetables whenever you can - a side salad with dinner, some cut up veggies as a snack, start stocking the freezer with frozen vegetable options! And - be sure to choose vegetables that you ENJOY eating!
- Start to be aware of your sodium intake - what are the major sources of sodium in your diet? Start checking the labels of your foods!
- Experiment with vegetarian protein sources like tofu, legumes, and tempeh - be sure to check the labels! Check for saturated fat, sodium and protein content!
- Experiment with whole grains - there are so many to choose from

How does diet impact blood pressure?

The foods we choose to eat can have a big impact on our blood pressure. Here is a simple breakdown of what to eat more of and what to eat less of:

EAT MORE:

- Fruits (high in calcium, magnesium and potassium)
- Vegetables (high in fiber, calcium, magnesium and potassium)
- Whole grains (high in fiber, calcium, magnesium and potassium)
- Low fat dairy (high in calcium, potassium and less saturated fat than full fat dairy)
- Nuts and seeds ((high in fiber, calcium, magnesium and potassium)
- Legumes (high in fiber, calcium, magnesium and potassium)
- Liquid oils (high in unsaturated fat)

EAT LESS:

- Restaurant and pre-prepared meals (high in sodium)
- Cheese (high in saturated fats and salt)
- Processed grains (low in fiber and minerals)
- Red meat (high in saturated fat)

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- Fried food (high in sodium, saturated fat)

Nutrients that impact Blood Pressure:

Potassium

Potassium lowers the effect of sodium in the body. The more potassium we eat, the more sodium we will release through our urine. Potassium also acts to reduce the tension on the walls of the blood vessels to lower blood pressure.

Recommended intake for potassium is 4700 mg daily. If you have any kidney issues be sure to discuss potassium intake with your doctor.

Foods high in potassium:

- Apricots
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Cantaloupe and honeydew melon
- Fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk
- Fat-free yogurt
- Grapefruit**
- Greens
- Halibut
- Lima beans
- Molasses
- Mushrooms
- Oranges
- Peas
- Prunes
- Raisins and dates
- Spinach
- Tomatoes, tomato juice and tomato sauce
- Tuna

**talk to your healthcare provider if you're taking a cholesterol-lowering drug

Magnesium

Magnesium helps our blood vessels relax which helps to lower blood pressure. Magnesium is also involved in hundreds of other functions in the body including energy production and stress management.

Foods high in magnesium:

- Pumpkin seeds
- Chia seeds
- Almonds

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- Spinach
- Cashews
- Black beans
- Kidney beans
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal
- Bananas
- Swiss chard
- Kale
- Lima beans
- Chickpeas
- Tuna
- Quinoa

Calcium

Calcium helps our blood vessels function properly by aiding in their ability to tighten and relax. Calcium is also crucial for the health of our bones and regulation of hormones and enzymes in the body.

Foods high in calcium:

- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Sardines, canned
- Salmon, canned
- Soy milk
- Tofu
- Turnip greens
- Kale
- Chia seeds
- Black-eyed peas
- Okra

Fiber

Dietary fiber plays so many important roles in our health. Fiber reduces our blood cholesterol levels to protect our heart. Foods that are rich in fiber are often also high in calcium, magnesium and potassium - win win!

Aim for between 25 and 30 grams of fiber daily from whole food sources.

Dietary fat

We want to choose primarily unsaturated fats - these will reduce our bad cholesterol while boosting up our heart protective good cholesterol. Saturated fats will do the opposite.

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Eat less of these - Foods high in saturated fat:

- Full fat dairy - butter, cheese, milk, yogurt
- Red meat
- Lard
- Shortening
- Baked goods - cakes, cookies, muffins, etc..
- Coconut oil and other tropical oils

Eat more of these - Foods high in unsaturated fat:

- Fish - especially salmon, herring, anchovies
- Nuts and seeds
- Fats that are liquid at room temperature - olive oil, canola, vegetable oils
- Avocado
- Olives