

The DASH Eating Plan

What is the DASH eating plan?

DASH, or the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, is an eating plan designed to help an individual lower their blood pressure and prevent heart disease. This is accomplished through use of a healthy eating plan and reduced sodium intake.

Why use DASH?

Studies sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute have shown that diets low in sodium and high in fruits and vegetables dramatically decreased the blood pressure of study participants.

How do I get started with DASH?

Step 1: Change Gradually

- ⇒ If you only eat a few servings of fruits or vegetables a day, add a serving to your meals or have a fruit or veggie as a snack.
- ⇒ Gradually increase your use of low-fat or fat-free dairy products to 3 servings a day.
- ⇒ Read the nutrition facts on dressings and margarines to choose the lowest fat variety.

Step 2: Treat meats as one part of the whole meal, instead of the focus

- ⇒ Limit your daily intake of meat to 6oz., or 3oz. a meal.
- ⇒ If you now eat large portions of meat cut back your portions gradually– by a 1/2 or a 1/3 at each meal.
- ⇒ Increase servings of vegetables, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, and beans in daily meals.
- ⇒ Include at least two vegetarian (meatless) meals each week.

Step 3: Use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and calories as desserts and snacks

- ⇒ Choose fresh fruits or canned fruits packed in their own juice or water
- ⇒ Try these snacks ideas: nuts mixed with raisins; graham crackers; fat-free and low-fat yogurt and frozen yogurt; popcorn with no salt or butter added; raw vegetables.



Make a dash for DASH

In addition to eating a healthy diet, add 30 minutes of moderate-level activity to your daily routine.

- ⇒ If your blood pressure is moderately elevated, 30 minutes of brisk walking on most days a week may be enough to keep you off medication.
- ⇒ If you take medication for high blood pressure, 30 minutes of moderate physical activity can make your medication work more effectively and make you feel better.
- ⇒ If you don't have high blood pressure, being physically active can help keep it that way. If you have normal blood pressure but are not active your chances of developing high blood pressure increase, especially as you get older or if you become overweight or obese or develop diabetes.



Adapted from “YOUR GUIDE TO Lowering Your Blood Pressure With DASH” from the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES and the National Institutes of Health .



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