

DASH EATING PLAN

Have you heard the buzz about DASH? It is a new pattern of eating that is recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as a formula for healthy eating.

What exactly is DASH?

DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. The DASH eating plan reduces blood pressure, but also is a healthy, low-fat, low-sodium plan that all adults can benefit from. DASH is just one of many ways to control high blood pressure. Other methods include maintaining a healthy weight, keeping physically active, limiting alcohol intake, and taking high blood pressure medicine as prescribed.

Why does the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend DASH?

DASH is based on research that shows that lowering high blood pressure is best achieved by eating a low-sodium, low-fat diet that is rich in whole grains, low-fat dairy foods, fruits, and vegetables. This diet pattern is similar to other healthful eating patterns that are suggested to prevent weight gain and chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer.

How can I cut back on the amount of salt I eat?

Salt (also known as sodium) is found in many foods including:

- Processed and packaged foods
- Tomato sauces
- Frozen and boxed dinners
- Salty snack foods, such as chips and pretzels
- Cured foods, such as bacon, ham, sausage, and bologna
- Pickles
- Condiments, such as soy sauce, ketchup, and barbeque sauce

Limiting these types of foods will dramatically decrease the amount of sodium in your diet.

What does whole grain mean?

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, “whole grains” are whole wheat, whole-grain corn, whole oats or oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, whole rye, whole-grain barley, wild rice, buckwheat, triticale, bulgur, millet, quinoa, and sorghum. To make sure a food contains whole grain, look for the term “whole grain” at the top of the ingredient list for the grain products you choose.

How do I start to change my eating habits?

Change gradually! Add a serving of vegetables at lunch and one at dinner. Gradually cut back from whole milk and full-fat cheeses to lower-fat dairy foods. Cut back on the portions of meat you eat. Make a few changes at a time. It is often easier than changing your entire diet overnight.

What foods are allowed on the DASH eating plan?

The following table gives you a guideline that provides roughly 2000 calories/day.

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes	Comments
Grains and grain products	7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • 1 oz dry cereal • ½ C rice, cooked pasta, or cereal 	Use at least 3 servings of whole-grain breads and cereals daily
Vegetables	4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 C raw, leafy vegetables • ½ C cooked vegetables • 6 fl oz vegetable juice 	Use brightly colored vegetables for the most nutrition
Fruits	4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 medium fruit • ¼ C dried fruit • ½ C fresh, frozen, or canned fruit • 6 fl oz fruit juice 	Use brightly colored fruits for the most nutrition
Low-fat or fat-free dairy foods	2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 fl oz milk • 1 C yogurt • 1½ oz cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk • Eat reduced-fat cheeses
Meats, poultry, and fish	2 or less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 oz cooked meat, poultry, or fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lean cuts of meat • Remove visible fat • Bake, grill, or roast instead of frying
Nuts, seeds, and dry beans	4-5/week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ⅓ C or 1½ oz nuts 2 Tbsp or • ½ oz seeds • ½ C cooked dry beans or peas 	Use a variety of nuts and seeds
Fats and oils	2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp soft margarine • 1 Tbsp low-fat mayonnaise • 2 Tbsp lite salad dressing • 1 tsp vegetable oil 	Use a variety of liquid oils, including olive, corn, sunflower, canola, peanut, safflower, and soybean oils
Sweets	5/week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Tbsp sugar • 1 Tbsp jelly or jam • ½ oz jelly beans • 8 fl oz sweetened drinks 	Count maple syrup, sugar, jelly, and all sweetened beverages as sweets

C=cup, fl oz=fluid ounce, oz=ounce, Tbsp=tablespoon, tsp=teaspoon

Reference

US Dept of Health and Human Services. *DASH Eating Pattern: Lower Your Blood Pressure*. Available at: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf. Accessed March 21, 2011.

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