

The DASH Diet

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) is an eating plan that was first made to lower blood pressure. It is also a “heart healthy” diet that can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. The DASH plan is high in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and protein that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

Salt

The plan focuses on lowering your salt intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. If you lower your salt intake even more (1,500 mg per day) you can lower blood pressure even more. The DASH eating plan is based on 2,000 calories per day.

How to Get Started

Make the change slowly.

- Focus on small steps to big change.

Eat more fruit and vegetables.

- Keep fruits and vegetables on hand. You can use fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.
- Choose pre-prepared items such as pre-peeled carrots, baby carrots, prewashed salad mix, individual-sized cans of fruit packed in their own juice.
- Add a serving of vegetables at lunch, dinner, and snacks to reach 4-5 servings per day.
- Add a serving of fruit to your meals, snack or enjoy as a dessert.

Aim for 3 servings of dairy or non-dairy substitutes per day.

- Slowly switch to fat-free and low-fat dairy products. Work your way to three servings a day.

- Non-dairy substitutes (soy milk, nut milk) should be unsweetened.
- Enjoy milk with lunch or dinner, instead of soda, sugar-sweetened tea, or alcohol.

Treat meat and poultry as one part of the whole meal, not the focus.

- Limit meat portions to 6 ounces a day (2 servings). Three ounces of red meat and poultry is about the size of a deck of cards. If you eat more than this, slowly cut the amount of meat to fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate.
- Include two or more meatless meals each week.
- Add fruit and vegetables, whole grains, beans, or tofu to meals to feel satisfied with smaller meat portions.

Change your salt habit.

- **Do not** keep salt on the table.
- Use half the usual amount (or less) when cooking and baking.
- Buy vegetables fresh, plain frozen, or canned with “no added salt” or “low-sodium.”
- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meats, rather than canned, smoked, cured or processed meats.
- Enjoy spicy seasonings instead of salt. Flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends.
- Limit frozen dinners, pizza, sub sandwiches, salty snacks (jerky, chips, pretzels, etc.), and canned soups/broths.
- When eating out, order foods without sauces (or sauces on the side) and ask that no salt, soy sauce, or other salty seasonings be used.

Simple Ways to Save Calories

- Have fruit or raw vegetables for a snack instead of chips, crackers, or sweets.
- Eat 1/4 cup of dried apricots instead of a 2 oz bag of pork rinds.
- Enjoy a 3-4 oz lean hamburger instead of 6 oz high fat hamburger. Add a 1/2 cup serving of carrots and a 1/2 cup serving of cucumbers instead of chips or fries.
- Make a stir fry with 3 oz of chicken instead of 6 oz and add an extra cup of cooked vegetables. Use a small amount of vegetable oil.
- Add an extra serving of vegetables to your meal to make 1/2 of your plate vegetables instead of having larger portions of grains, starches, or meat.
- Try fresh fruit for dessert instead of a cookie, cake, pie, or ice cream.
- Use low fat or fat-free dairy products instead of higher fat dairy products.
- Use food labels to compare packaged foods. Items marked low-fat or fat free are not always lower in calories.
- Use low-fat salad dressings or homemade dressings to replace high calorie salad dressing.
- Eat smaller portions by using smaller plates.
- Limit foods with high amounts of added sugar, such as pies, flavored yogurts, some cereals and bars, candy, ice cream, sherbet, regular sodas, and fruit drinks.
- Eat fruits canned in their own juice instead of syrup.
- Snack on fruit, vegetable sticks, unbuttered/unsalted popcorn, or handful of nuts.
- Drink water or sparkling mineral water. Add citrus to enhance flavor.

Ideas for Meals and Snacks

Breakfast

- 1 cup cooked oatmeal, 100% rolled oats or steel-cut, with 1% milk (4-6 oz.), 2 Tbsp walnuts, 1 tsp honey, 1 tbsp chia seeds, 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1 cup whole grain cereal with 4-6 oz low-fat milk, 1 Tbsp flaxmeal, 2 Tbsp sliced almonds, 1/2 cup fruit
- 1-2 slices of whole wheat toast with 1-2 Tbsp natural peanut butter and 1/2 cup sliced strawberries or banana
- 2 egg whites scrambled with 1 cup fresh spinach, seasoned with black pepper or salt-free seasoning, 1 whole grain English muffin
- 1-2 slices whole grain toast with 1/2 avocado, Mrs. Dash Bagel Seasoning and 1 egg

Lunch and Dinner

- 3 oz chicken salad with light mayo, mixed greens and a 100% whole wheat pita bread, 1/2 cup fruit salad and 1% milk or yogurt
- 1 whole grain tortilla roll-up with 3 oz low sodium turkey, 1 oz Swiss cheese, and 1 Tbsp mustard, 1 cup raw snow peas and 1 cup frozen grapes
- 3 oz tuna salad in a 100% whole wheat pita pocket with shredded carrots, cucumber, tomato slices, and a medium apple
- 3 oz roasted turkey with 1/2 cup sautéed peppers and onions, a lettuce salad with 1 Tbsp olive oil and vinegar dressing
- 3/4 cup marinara sauce with 3 oz lean ground turkey or beef over spaghetti squash, romaine salad with 1 Tbsp olive oil and vinegar dressing, and 1 cup fresh fruit salad

- 4 oz baked cod, ½ cup brown rice with scallions, and 1 cup roasted beets
- 4 oz. baked salmon, ½ cup wild rice, and 1 cup roasted brussels sprouts with 1 oz pine nuts
- 2 cups spring mix or spinach with cherry tomatoes, sliced carrots, sliced radishes, cucumber slices, 1 oz almonds, 3 oz grilled chicken, and 2 Tbsp oil/vinegar salad dressing with 1 cup fresh fruit
- 1 cup garbanzo bean and potato curry, a side salad with 1 Tbsp oil/vinegar or yogurt-based dressing

Snacks

- 1 medium apple + 1 string cheese
- 2 Tbsp walnuts + 2 Tbsp dried fruit
- 1 cup vegetable sticks + 3 Tbsp hummus
- 1 oz. peanuts in a shell + 1 medium orange
- 1 cup bell pepper strips + 1/3 cup guacamole
- 1 medium nectarine + 1 oz almonds
- 1 light Laughing Cow® cheese + 5 high fiber crackers
- 6 oz greek yogurt + ½ cup sliced fruit
- 1 slice whole grain bread + 2 Tbsp avocado spread
- 3 cups light popcorn + 2 tbsp sunflower seeds
- 1 medium apple, sliced + 1-2 Tbsp natural peanut butter

Dash Diet Meal Planning Guide

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Size	Examples
Grains and starches	6-8	1 slice whole grain bread ½ cup cooked oatmeal, oat bran ½ whole grain English muffin 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or starchy vegetable	100% whole wheat bread, 100% whole wheat pasta, old-fashioned or rolled oats, brown and wild rice, barley, quinoa, farro, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peas, corn
Vegetables	4-5	1 cup leafy or raw vegetables ½ cup cooked vegetables 4-6 oz low sodium vegetable juice	Brussel sprouts, green beans, carrots, zucchini, tomatoes, broccoli, bell peppers, cauliflower, spinach, snap peas, etc.
Fruit	4-5	1 medium fruit 1/2 banana 15 grapes 2 Tbsp dried fruit ½ cup fresh cut or frozen fruit	Berries, melon, apples, oranges, grapefruit, bananas, dried apricots, raisins, peaches, pears, plums, pineapple, mango, prunes, kiwi, etc.
Dairy foods, low-fat or non-fat	2-3	8 oz. (1 cup) milk 6 oz. (1 cup) yogurt 1 ½ oz cheese	Skim or 1% milk, non-fat plain or Greek yogurt, part-skim or low-fat cheeses. Those who choose not to eat dairy can substitute non-dairy alternatives like unsweetened soy, almond, oat, or flaxseed milk.
Lean meat, poultry, fish Lean meat, poultry, fish cont.	6 oz or less	3 oz cooked chicken, turkey, fish, or lean meat 1 egg (no more than 4 yolks per week)	Skinless poultry; white meat Salmon, tuna, sardines, cod, etc. Round or loin cuts of beef, venison, pork, and lamb Roast broil or grill meats. Soy-based options (i.e., tofu and tempeh) can be alternatives to meat. 2 egg whites can be used in place of 1 whole egg.
Nuts, seeds, dry beans	4-5 weekly	¼ cup or 1 oz nuts 2 Tbsp nut butter 2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds ½ cup cooked beans	Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, pistachios, pecans, mixed nuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, lentils, kidney beans, black beans, chickpeas, split peas, etc. Choose dry beans over canned if possible; otherwise choose “low sodium,” drain, and rinse beans.

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Size	Examples
Fats and oils	2-3	1 tsp. oil 1 tsp. tub margarine or buttery spread 1 Tbsp mayonnaise made with olive oil 1-2 Tbsp oil-based (or yogurt-based) salad dressing ¼ avocado 10 olives	Olive, avocado, sesame, peanut, canola oils. Choose spreads and dressings based on these oils.
Sweets	<5 weekly	1 Tbsp sugar, jelly, jam, honey, maple syrup, or agave 3 pieces hard candy ½ cup non-fat or low-fat frozen yogurt or ice cream 1/2 cup sorbet or gelatin 1 oz dark chocolate	Fresh fruit is the best choice when you want something sweet. Try frozen fruits such as grapes or homemade frozen fruit sorbet.

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please call UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH)
(608) 890-5500

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF)
(608) 287-2770

Learn More

Visit our website at:
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Scan QR Code below or visit the link to watch the dash diet video:
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Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#379.