



## DASH to Lower Your Blood Pressure

Want to lower your blood pressure? Try the DASH eating plan, short for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. This plan is aimed at lowering your blood pressure by focusing on the combinations of nutrients in wholesome foods.

Two studies, both supported by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, offer proof that DASH works. The plan was the best for lowering blood pressure in both studies. It worked as early as two weeks after starting. DASH isn't just for people with high blood pressure. Even if your blood pressure is okay now, it doesn't mean that you're immune from developing hypertension.

The DASH eating plan includes daily servings of:

- Seven to eight servings of grains or grain products
- Four to five servings of vegetables
- Four to five servings of fruit
- Two to three servings of low-fat dairy foods
- No more than two servings of meat, poultry, and fish
- Two to three servings of fats and oils

The diet is based on a few key points:

- By choosing fruits and vegetables, you're more likely to cut out high-sodium, processed foods. Too much sodium can increase blood pressure.
- A diet lacking calcium, potassium, and magnesium is linked to high blood pressure. DASH is rich in these minerals.
- A low-saturated fat, low-total fat diet decreases blood pressure. Thirty percent of your daily calories should be from fat, with only seven percent from saturated fats.
- Healthy foods work together in your body. Skip the supplements. They don't work nearly as well as nutrients from food.

Getting started:

- Add a serving of fruit to meals. A serving amounts to a handful of strawberries or a medium apple. Add veggies (e.g., a half cup of broccoli) to lunch and dinner.
- Read labels on margarine and salad dressings. Choose products low in saturated and trans fats.
- Buy cereals and breads made with whole grains.
- Try casseroles, pasta, and stir-fry dishes, which contain less meat and more veggies, grains, and pasta.
- Cut down the size of meat servings. Have a 3-ounce, rather than a 6-ounce, hamburger. Instead of five ounces of chicken, have a stir-fry with two ounces of chicken and 1 ½ cups of veggies.
- Sprinkle fruit or nuts into low-fat yogurt.
- Snack on fruit, vegetable sticks, and unsalted pretzels and popcorn.

Source: UnitedHealthcare

**For more information about DASH, go to [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov).**