

HEALTHY EATING PLAN

FOR HYPERTENSION

What you eat affects your blood pressure. A healthy eating plan can reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure and lower blood pressure that is already too high.

The DASH diet, which stands for **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension** is a general guide which assists in lowering blood pressure and improving overall health.

Ultimately, this eating plan is low in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol, and high in fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods. The DASH eating plan includes whole grains, poultry, fish, and nuts, and has low amounts of fats, red meats, sweets, and sugared beverages. It is also high in potassium, calcium, and magnesium, as well as protein and fibre. Eating foods lower in salt and sodium can also reduce blood pressure.

The DASH eating plan has more daily servings of fruits, vegetables, and grains than you may be used to eating. These foods are high in fibre, and eating more of them may temporarily cause bloating and diarrhoea. To avoid this, we advise that you gradually increase your servings of fruits, vegetables and grains to allow your body to adapt.

A good first step is to understand what your current diet looks like. It is very common to underestimate how much we are taking in each day when eating on the run, or snacking between meals. In order to take a long hard look at your current eating habits, write down everything that you eat, how much, when, and why for a full week including the weekends. This will reveal gaps in your diet from both a nutrient perspective, but may also reveal some interesting trends about when you take in most of your calories, the times of day you may be snacking on sugary or high fat foods and what could possibly be causing these habits.

DASH DIET DOS:

- Add lentils and a variety of beans to your diet
- Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables
- Eat only small portions of low-fat dairy products
- Limit poultry and fish
- Limit nuts

WHY?

Vegetables and fruit contain significant amounts of potassium. Potassium appears to replace and eliminate excess sodium from the body's tissues, a primary cause of high blood pressure. A maximum of two portions of fish, meat or poultry and three portions of low-fat or fat-free dairy products will assist in counteracting elevated blood fat levels and possible kidney dysfunctions due to high protein intake.

WHAT CAN I EAT ON THE DASH DIET?

| FOOD GROUP | DAILY SERVINGS | SERVING SIZES | EXAMPLES/NOTES |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Grains and cereals | 7 - 8 | 1 slice of bread ½ cup dry cereal ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal | Whole wheat bread or low-GI bread, All Bran and other whole wheat cereals, oats, ProVita and RyeVita |
| Vegetables | 4 - 5 | 1 cup raw leafy vegetables ½ cup cooked vegetables 170ml vegetable juice or soup | Tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, peas, sweet potatoes, broccoli, cabbage, green beans, spinach, kale, artichokes, baby marrows, pumpkin |
| Fruits | 4 - 5 | 170ml fruit juice 1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit | Apricots, pears, peaches, bananas, oranges, mangoes, melons, berries, raisins, naartjies |
| Low fat or fat free dairy | 2 - 3 | 200ml milk 1 cup yoghurt 30g cheese | Skim or low fat milk, buttermilk, low fat or fat free cottage cheese, low fat mozzarella, low fat or fat free yoghurt |
| Meats, poultry and fish | 2 or less | 60g cooked meats, poultry or fish | Select only lean meats, trim away all visible fat, grill, roast or boil instead of frying, or lightly pan fry with a teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil, remove skin from poultry and avoid all processed meats and smoked meats |
| Nuts, seeds and legumes | 4-5 per week | 30g or 1/3 cup nuts 2 Tbs seeds ½ cup cooked legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans) | Almonds, macadamias, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, kidney beans, cooked or canned dry beans, pea's or lentils |

The DASH eating plan was not designed to promote weight loss. But it is rich in low-calorie foods such as fruits and vegetables which do promote weight loss when eaten in the correct portion sizes. For further assistance with portion sizes, recipes and eating plans, consult your nearest dietitian.

HOW TO INCORPORATE THESE FOOD GROUPS INTO YOUR DAILY EATING PLAN:

- Add a vegetable or fruit serving at lunch and dinner.
- Use only half the butter or margarine you do now.
- Get added nutrients such as the B vitamins by choosing whole grain foods, including whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals.
- Spread out the servings of fruit and veg. Have two servings of fruits and/or vegetables at each meal, or add fruits as snacks.
- Treat meat as one part of the meal, instead of the focus. Try casseroles, pasta, and stir-fry dishes. Have two or more meatless meals a week.

USE MORE SPICES AND LESS SALT

- An important part of healthy eating is choosing foods that are low in salt (sodium chloride) and other forms of sodium. Using less sodium is key to keeping blood pressure at a healthy level. We should consume no more than 6 grams (about 1 teaspoon) of table salt a day. For someone with high blood pressure, the doctor may advise less. The 6 grams includes all salt and sodium consumed, including that used in cooking and at the table.
- Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned 'with no salt added' vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned or processed types.

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