
Using the DASH Diet to Help Lower Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is how hard your blood pushes against artery walls.

If you have high blood pressure, there are many ways to help manage your blood pressure and decrease your risk, including healthy eating, physical activity and medication.

To help manage your high blood pressure:

- Follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan described below.
 - The DASH diet can also lower LDL or bad cholesterol. Combined with reducing blood pressure, the diet helps to reduce your chance of developing heart disease.
- Keep active. Engage in regular physical activity for at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) each week.
- If you drink, limit your alcohol intake to 2 drinks or less per day if you are a man, and 1 or less drink per day if you are female.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.
- Find ways to manage and lower your stress levels
- Take your blood pressure medicine as directed.
 - Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist before you eat grapefruit, Seville oranges or drink large amounts of fruit juice. They may affect how some blood pressure medications work.
 - Avoid black licorice.
 - Check with your pharmacist before taking natural health products. Some of these products may affect how your medications work.

The Lower Sodium DASH Eating Plan

- Aims for a sodium intake of 1500 mg ($\frac{2}{3}$ tsp) sodium or salt per day. Following the DASH diet with 2300 mg of sodium will help lower blood pressure. Moving from 2300mg to 1500mg of sodium helps lower blood pressure further

- Is high in vegetables, fruit, low fat dairy products and whole grains.
- Is lower in saturated fat, cholesterol, total fat and sodium.
- Is lower in lean red meats, fish and poultry.
- Includes nuts, seeds and legumes several times a week.
- Is low in sweets, added sugars and sugary beverages.
- Is rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium and fibre.

The DASH diet suggests a certain number of servings from each food category listed below based on three different calorie level diets.

Your calorie level will depend on your age, physical activity level and if you want to lose weight. If you carry excess body fat, losing 4 to 5 kg can help improve blood pressure.

Talk to a registered dietitian who can help you to know which calorie level you should aim for and help you modify the amounts suggested in the table below to meet your nutrient needs and food preferences.

Food	Calorie Level	Daily Servings	Examples of Various Serving Sizes
Whole Grains	1600 calories	6	1 slice whole grain bread, ½ pita
	2000 calories	6-8	30 g dry high fibre cereal (see cereal box for volume)
	2600 calories	10-11	125 mL (½ cup) cooked cereal, brown rice, or whole wheat pasta
Vegetables	1600 calories	3-4	250 mL (1 cup) raw leafy vegetable
	2000 calories	4-5	125 mL (½ cup) cut-up raw or cooked vegetables
	2600 calories	5-6	125 mL (½ cup) low sodium vegetable juice

Fruits	1600 calories	4	1 medium piece of fruit 60 mL (¼ cup) dried fruit 125 mL (½ cup) fresh, frozen, or canned fruit
	2000 calories	4-5	
	2600 calories	5-6	
Low and non-fat dairy foods	1600 calories	2-3	250 mL (1 cup) skim or 1% milk 250 mL (1 cup) low fat yogurt (2% or less milk fat M.F.) 50 g (1 ½ oz) low fat cheese (15-19% M.F.)
	2000 calories	2-3	
	2600 calories	3	
Lean meats, poultry and fish	1600 calories	3-6	25 g (1 oz) lean cooked meats, skinless poultry or fish or shellfish 1 egg
	2000 calories	Up to 6	
	2600 calories	Up to 6	
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	1600 calories	3 per week	60-125 mL (¼ to ½ cup) nuts (almonds, peanuts, walnuts) 30 mL (2 Tbsp) seeds (sunflower, flax, pumpkin) 125 mL (½ cup) cooked legumes (kidney beans, lentils, chick peas) 125 mL (½ cup) tofu 30 mL (2 Tbsp) peanut butter
	2000 calories	4-5 per week	
	2600 calories	1 per day	
Fats and oils	1600 calories	2	5 mL (1 tsp) non- hydrogenated soft margarine 5 mL (1 tsp) vegetable oil (canola, olive) 15 mL (1 Tbsp) low fat mayonnaise 15 mL (1 Tbsp) regular salad dressing or 2 Tbsp of low fat dressing *Fat free salad dressing is a free choice
	2000 calories	2-3	
	2600 calories	3	

Sweets and added sugars	1600 calories	Per week Up to 3	15 mL (1 Tbsp) sugar, jelly or jam 125 mL (½ cup) sorbet, ice cream or frozen yogurt
	2000 calories	Up to 5	
	2600 calories	Up to 5	



Steps you can take

To reduce your sodium:

- Read food labels for sodium. On the Nutrition Facts table, choose foods that are less than 15% of the Daily Value (DV) for sodium.
- Choose low sodium or no salt added versions of foods. Look for words such as “sodium-free”, “low sodium” or “no added salt” on the package.
- Check the Ingredient List on food labels. Choose products that do not contain: sodium, monosodium glutamate (MSG), garlic salt, sea salt, celery salt, or half salt.
- Use less or no salt when cooking. Use fresh or dried herbs, spices and seasonings to add a fresh flavour to your foods.
- Try more plant-based meals like vegetarian chili and soy burgers.
- Avoid smoked, cured and processed meats.
- Cut back on commercially prepared, processed and fast foods.
- Limit condiments like mustard, ketchup and relish and sauces such as barbeque, soy, teriyaki and Worcestershire.
- Rinse canned foods like canned beans, peas or lentils and tuna to lower the salt content.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before using salt substitutes (for example: Half Salt®, No Salt®). Some contain potassium that may affect how your blood pressure medication works.

Additional Resources

- Healthy Eating Guidelines for Lower Sodium Eating <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrWgE=&PreviewHandout=bA=>
- Physical Activity and Your Health <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/physical-activity-your-health.html>
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. How to Measure Your Waist Circumference <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/get-healthy/healthy-weight/healthy-weight-and-waist>
- BMI Calculator <https://bmicalculatorcanada.com/>
- Canada's Food Guide www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

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Notes

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