

Eating Heart-Healthy Food: Using the DASH Plan



Eating for your heart doesn't have to be hard or boring. You just need to know how to make healthier choices. The DASH eating plan was created to help you do just that. DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. This plan is proven to be healthier for your heart and to lower your risk for high blood pressure. It can also help lower your risk for cancer, stroke, heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes.

Choosing from each food group

Choose foods from each of the food groups below each day. Try to get the recommended number of servings for each food group. The serving numbers are based on a diet of 2,000 calories a day. Talk with your healthcare provider if you're not sure about your calorie needs. Along with getting the correct servings, the DASH plan also advises less than 2,300 mg of salt (sodium) per day. Lowering sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day lowers blood pressure even more. (There's about 2,300 mg of sodium in 1 teaspoon of salt.)

Grains

Servings: 6 to 8 a day

A serving is:

- 1 slice bread
- 1 ounce dry cereal
- Half a cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

Best choices: Whole grains and any high-fiber grains

Fruits

Servings: 4 to 5 a day

A serving is:

- 1 medium fruit
- One-quarter cup dried fruit
- Half a cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit
- Half a cup of 100% fruit juices

Best choices: A variety of fresh fruits of different colors. Whole fruits are a better choice than fruit juices.

Vegetables

Servings: 4 to 5 a day

A serving is:

- 1 cup raw leafy vegetable
- Half a cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable
- Half a cup vegetable juice

Best choices: Fresh or frozen vegetables prepared without added salt or fat

Low-fat or fat-free dairy

Servings: 2 to 3 a day

A serving is:

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup yogurt
- One and a half ounces cheese

Best choices: Skim or 1% milk, low-fat or fat-free yogurt or buttermilk, and low-fat cheeses

Lean meats, poultry, fish

Servings: 6 or fewer a day

A serving is:

- 1 ounce cooked meats, poultry, or fish
- 1 egg

Best choices: Lean poultry and fish. Trim away visible fat. Broil, grill, roast, or boil instead of frying. Remove skin from poultry before eating. Limit how much red meat you eat.

Fats and oils

Servings: 2 to 3 a day

A serving is:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon soft margarine
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons salad dressing

Best choices: Nut and vegetable oils (nontropical vegetable oils), such as olive and canola oil

Nuts, seeds, beans

Servings: 4 to 5 a week

A serving is:

- One-third cup nuts (1.5 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons nut butter or seeds
- Half a cup cooked dry beans or legumes

Best choices: Dry roasted nuts with no salt added, lentils, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, and whole pinto beans

Sweets

Servings: 5 a week or fewer

A serving is:

- 1 tablespoon sugar, maple syrup, or honey
- 1 tablespoon jam or jelly
- 1 half-ounce jelly beans (about 15)
- 1 cup lemonade

Best choices: Dried fruit can be a satisfying sweet. Choose low-fat sweets. And watch your serving sizes!

For more on the DASH eating plan, visit:

[National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan)