

# DASH Eating Plan

If you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, your healthcare provider may recommend the DASH eating plan.

This flexible, balanced eating plan is proven to help lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

It is also a healthy way to lose weight. And it could lower your risk for health problems like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. It focuses on making heart-healthy food choices, including eating less salt.

The standard DASH plan recommends having no more than 2,300 mg of sodium each day. And reducing your sodium further, to 1,500 mg a day, can help lower your blood pressure even more.

In addition to having less sodium, you'll also eat foods that are: low in saturated fat and trans fat; and high in potassium, calcium, magnesium, fiber, and protein.

This means eating more: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy, lean protein like chicken and fish, beans, nuts and seeds, and vegetable oils.

It also means eating less: fatty or processed meats, like bacon, sausage, and steak, full-fat dairy, sugary drinks, and sweets.

To help you choose foods that fit into the DASH plan, use these tips:

When food shopping, read the food labels. Processed and packaged foods are often high in sodium, even if they do not taste salty.

So look at the fat, cholesterol, and sodium levels on the label to help you make the best choice.

When cooking, do not add salt. Instead, flavor your foods with salt-free seasoning blends, herbs, spices, or lemon or lime juice.

When ordering from a restaurant, ask that foods be made without added salt. And stay away from menu items with salty ingredients like bacon, pickles, olives, soy sauce, and cheese.

The DASH eating plan is just one part of a heart-healthy lifestyle. Other healthy habits can also help you manage blood pressure and cholesterol.

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These include: being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, getting healthy sleep, and limiting alcohol.

You'll see the most benefit from adopting these healthy habits for life. To help you succeed, focus on changing one habit at a time.

Ask your healthcare provider if the DASH eating plan is right for you. Changing your habits takes time but is the best thing you can do to improve your overall health.