

The DASH Diet

Scientific studies funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute have shown that eating a diet rich in **fruits, vegetables, fat-free and low-fat dairy products** while reducing consumption of saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium significantly **lowered blood pressure**.¹ Keeping blood pressure at a normal level is important because even slightly elevated blood pressure encourages plaque buildup on the arteries which leads to less blood flow through the heart and therefore the body.²



What Should My Blood Pressure Be?

Category	Systolic (mmHg)		Diastolic (mmHg)
Normal	<120	and	<80
Elevated	120 - 129	and	<80
Hypertension Stage 1	130 - 139	or	80 - 89
Hypertension Stage 2	≥140	or	≥90



To help control your blood pressure you can . . .

- ⇒ Maintain a healthy weight.
- ⇒ Be moderately physically active on most days of the week.
- ⇒ Follow the DASH Diet, which includes foods lower in sodium.
- ⇒ If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation (1 drink per day for women, 2 drinks per day for men).
- ⇒ If you have high blood pressure and are prescribed medication, take as directed

¹www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan

²J Am Coll Cardiol. 2018;71:e127-e248

The Dash Eating Plan

The Dash diet is based on 2000 calories per day. You can adjust the number of servings from each group in order to match your calorie needs. In other words, you can eat fewer servings from each group if you would like to lose weight or more servings from each group if you need to gain weight but you must still eat foods from each of the food groups described. Why? Because nutrients like **potassium** and **magnesium**, which are found in fruits and vegetables, and **calcium**, which is found in fat-free and low-fat dairy products, help maintain normal blood pressure.

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes
Grains	6-8	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal ½ cup cooked rice or pasta
Vegetables	4-5	1 cup raw leafy vegetable ½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable ½ cup vegetable juice
Fruits	4-5	1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit ½ cup fruit juice
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2-3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1 ½ oz cheese
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	≤6 oz per day	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish 1 egg or ¼ cup egg substitutes
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	4-5 per week	1/3 cup or 1 ½ oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds ½ cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas)
Fats and oils	2-3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp salad dressing
Sweets and added sugars	≤5 per week	1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jelly or jam ½ cup sorbet, gelatin 1 cup lemonade

¹www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan

²J Am Coll Cardiol. 2018;71:e127-e248

Reduce Salt or Sodium while Increasing Potassium

An important part of the DASH Diet is reducing the amount of salt and sodium you take in each day while increasing the amount of dietary potassium, and to a lesser extent, magnesium and calcium.

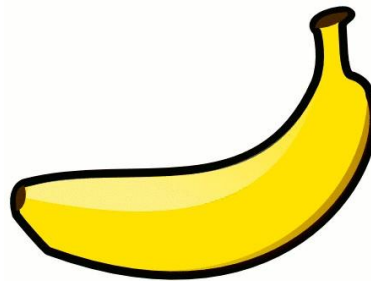
Salt is sodium chloride and for the most part, we can reduce the amount of salt we get by not using a saltshaker at the table or when cooking. **Sodium** is found in highest amounts in process and fast food; therefore, if we eat fewer processed foods and fast food less often, we reduce how much sodium we get.

Dietary **potassium** appears to offset the adverse effects of dietary sodium and is most often found in less processed whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, and beans. Potassium in supplements are not recommended, unless prescribed by your physician, due to possible adverse effects including negative interactions with medications.

The new food label (mandatory by 2020) will identify not only the amount of sodium but also the amount of potassium in labeled foods. When possible, aim for a ratio of 1 mg of sodium to 2 mg of potassium, but keep in mind that many foods high in potassium are not labeled such as bananas or avocados.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per 2/3 cup	
Calories	230
% DV*	
12%	Total Fat 8g
5%	Saturated Fat 1g
	Trans Fat 0g
0%	Cholesterol 0mg
7%	Sodium 160mg
12%	Total Carbs 37g
14%	Dietary Fiber 4g
	Sugars 1g
	Added Sugars 0g
	Protein 3g
10%	Vitamin D 2mcg
20%	Calcium 260mg
45%	Iron 8mg
5%	Potassium 235mg
* Footnote on Daily Values (DV) and calories reference to be inserted here.	

Keep in mind that many unlabeled whole foods are excellent sources of potassium.



Look for < 140 mg of sodium per serving and more potassium than sodium per serving.

¹www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan

²J Am Coll Cardiol. 2018;71:e127-e248

Simple tips for reducing sodium while increasing potassium

1. **Use spices and sodium-free seasonings** to flavor foods (for example, use dill, ginger, or rosemary to flavor fish, and garlic powder, thyme, and oregano to flavor salad dressing or tomato sauces).
2. **Cook grains without adding salt.** Use spices instead of salt while cooking or at the table (for example, add a pinch of celery seed, cumin, or onion powder to rice for added flavor).
3. **Purchase lower sodium condiments** and use sparingly if they still contain a lot of sodium (for example, low sodium soy sauce).
4. **Choose fresh and frozen** (without sauce) vegetables or rinse canned vegetables before eating.
5. **Choose fresh** fish, and lean cuts of poultry and pork rather than canned, smoked, or processed versions.
6. **Choose low sodium** (e.g. beans) or no salt added foods (e.g. ketchup) when possible and check food labels on convenience items and look for those lowest in sodium.
7. **Fruit is a good source of potassium.** Eat at least two whole pieces of fruit per day. Add dried fruit to cereal, yogurt, or salads.
8. **Keep cut up vegetables handy** for crunchy snacks, lunch box additions, or dinner sides. Pepper slices, broccoli and cauliflower florets, carrot or celery sticks, cucumbers, snap peas, or whole radishes are colorful and satisfying.
9. **Include tomato-based products** (paste, sauce and juice) to your diet. Tomatoes and tomato-based products are especially high in potassium; however, they are often high in sodium so look for lower sodium versions.
10. **Drink non-fat or low-fat milk or eat non-fat or low-fat yogurt.** Milk and yogurt are both excellent sources of potassium.
11. **Add beans** to soups, salads or sandwich wraps. Beans are rich in potassium and they are also a good source of heart-healthy soluble fiber.
12. **Stock your freezer with frozen vegetables** without added sauces. They are convenient and easy to microwave, steam, or stir fry for a quick side dish.

¹www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan

²J Am Coll Cardiol. 2018;71:e127-e248