

The DASH Diet



Studies show that if you have high blood pressure, following the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet can lower your systolic blood pressure by 10 mm/hg after 8 weeks. Additionally, average weight loss in this time is 5-20lbs. If you add a mild to moderate exercise plan to this diet, your sBP and weight are likely to decrease by even more.

In addition to the recommendations below, I often advise my patients to follow these DASH diet tweaks:

- reduce the grains serving to a maximum of 4 per day
- add 2 tbsp. of olive oil per day (easily incorporated into a homemade salad dressing)
- eat red meat only once per week
- increase the servings of fruits and veggies to 5-10, with the focus on increasing vegetables
- swap out the dairy for more servings of nuts and seeds

The DASH Eating Plan

Use this chart to help you plan your menus or help you shop for foods.

Food Group	Servings Per Day	Serving Size	Examples & Notes	Importance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Plan
Grains <i>The DASH plan recommends whole grains.</i>	6-8	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal	Whole wheat bread and rolls, whole wheat pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn	Major source of energy and fiber
Vegetables	3-5	1 cup raw leafy vegetables ½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetables ½ cup vegetable juice	Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
Fruits	4-5	1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit ½ cup fruit juice	Apples, apricots, bananas, dates, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, mangoes, melons, peaches, pineapples, raisins, strawberries, tangerines	Important sources of potassium, magnesium and fiber
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2-3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1½ oz cheese	Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or buttermilk; fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese; fat-free or low-fat regular or frozen yogurt	Major sources of calcium and protein
Lean meats, poultry and fish	3 oz-6 oz	1 oz cooked meats, poultry or fish 1 egg	Select only lean meats; trim away visible fat; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
Nuts, seeds and legumes	3-5 per week	½ cup or 1½ oz nuts 2 T peanut butter 2 T or ½ oz seeds ½ cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas)	Almonds, hazelnuts, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, kidney beans, lentils, split peas	Rich sources of energy, magnesium, protein and fiber
Fats and oils	2-3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 T mayonnaise 2 T salad dressing	Soft margarine, vegetable oil (such as canola, corn, olive or safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing	The DASH study had 27 percent of calories as fat, including fat in or added to foods
Sweets and added sugars	Less than 5 per week	1 T sugar 1 T jelly or jam ½ cup sorbet, gelatin 1 cup lemonade	Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup, sorbet and ices, sugar	Sweets should be low in fat

Abbreviations: oz = ounce, T = tablespoon, tsp = teaspoon