

Following the DASH Eating Plan

Use this chart to help you plan your menus—or take it with you when you go to the store.

Food Group	Servings Per Day			Serving Sizes	Examples and Notes	Significance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Plan
	1,600 Calories	2,000 Calories	2,600 Calories			
Grains*	6	6–8	10–11	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal† 1/2 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 sources of energy and fiber
Vegetables	3–4	4–5	5–6	1 cup raw leafy vegetable 1/2 cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable 1/2 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	4–5	5–6	1 medium fruit 1/4 cup dried fruit 1/2 cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit 1/2 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	2–3	3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1 1/2 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	3–6	6 or less	6	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish 1 egg‡	Select only lean; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3 per week	4–5 per week	1	1/3 cup or 1 1/2 oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp or 1/2 oz seeds 1/2 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 ^f	2	2–3	3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp 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	0	5 or less per week	≤ 2	1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jelly or jam 1/2 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

* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

† Serving sizes vary between 1/2 cup and 1 1/4 cups, depending on cereal type. Check the product's Nutrition Facts label.

‡ Since eggs are high in cholesterol, limit egg yolk intake to no more than four per week; two egg whites have the same protein content as 1 oz of meat.

^f Fat content changes serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp of regular salad dressing equals one serving; 1 Tbsp of a low-fat dressing equals one-half serving; 1 Tbsp of a fat-free dressing equals zero servings.

Abbreviations: oz = ounce; Tbsp = tablespoon; tsp = teaspoon.

- Increase servings of vegetables, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and cooked dry beans. Try casseroles and stir-fry dishes, which have less meat and more vegetables, grains, and dry beans.
- For snacks and desserts, use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and calories—for example, unsalted rice cakes; unsalted nuts or seeds, raisins; graham crackers; fat-free, low-fat, or frozen yogurt; popcorn with no salt or butter added; or raw vegetables.
- Use fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables and fruits.

DASH Hints

- Be aware that DASH has more servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods than you may be used to eating. These foods are high in fiber and may cause some bloating and diarrhea. To avoid these problems, gradually increase the amount of fruit, vegetables, and whole grain foods that you eat over several weeks.
- If you have trouble digesting milk products, try taking lactase-enzyme pills (available at drug stores and groceries) with milk products. Or buy lactose-free milk, which includes the lactase enzyme.
- If you don't like or are allergic to nuts, use seeds or legumes (cooked dried beans or peas).
- If you take medicines to control your high blood pressure, keep taking them. But tell your doctor that you are now eating the DASH way.

Other Lifestyle Changes

Making other lifestyle changes while following the DASH eating plan is the best way to prevent and control high blood pressure.

Lose Weight, If Necessary, While Following DASH
DASH is rich in lower calorie foods, such as fruits and vegetables, so it can easily be changed to support weight loss. You can reduce calories even more by replacing higher calorie foods, such as sweets, with more fruits and vegetables. The best way to take off pounds is to do it slowly, over time, by getting more physical activity and eating fewer calories. To develop a weight-loss or weight-maintenance program that's tailored for you, talk to your doctor or registered dietitian.

Be Physically Active While Following the DASH Eating Plan

Combining DASH with a regular physical activity program, such as walking or swimming, will help you shed pounds and stay trim for the long term. Start with a simple 15-minute walk during your favorite time of day and gradually increase the amount of time you are active. You can do an activity for 30 minutes at one time, or choose shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. The important thing is to total about 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days. To avoid weight gain or sustain weight loss, try for 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity each day.

Make the DASH for Life

DASH can help you prevent and control high blood pressure. It can also help you lose weight, if you need to. It meets your nutritional needs and has other health benefits for your heart. So get started today and make the DASH for a healthy life.

To Learn More

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) for information on heart disease and heart health.

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
Phone: 301-592-8573
TTY: 240-629-3255
Fax: 301-592-8563

Also check out these heart health resources:

NHLBI Web site: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

“Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005” and “A Healthier You”: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/

“Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure With DASH”: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm>

“Your Guide to Lowering High Blood Pressure”: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html

“Aim for a Healthy Weight”: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/index.htm