

Nutrition Therapy for High Blood Pressure

Research shows high blood pressure can be lowered by following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan. The meal plan is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods. Also, it is low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Guidelines for the DASH eating plan are as follows:

1. Enjoy plenty of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. Daily serving recommendations are listed below.
 - a. 7–8 servings of whole grains and grain products
 - b. 4–5 servings of vegetables
 - c. 4–5 servings of fruit
 - d. 2–3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products
2. Reduce the amount of total fat and saturated fat in your diet.
 - a. Cut down on high fat foods such as ice cream, red meat, cakes, chips and fried foods. The fat in these foods can cause your arteries to narrow and increase your blood pressure.
3. Eat foods that are low in cholesterol and try not to exceed 300mg per day. You can do this by cutting back on the amount of red meat and animal products you eat.
4. Limit your sodium intake to 2,400mg per day.
5. Include lots of fiber, potassium, calcium and magnesium in your diet.
 - a. Fiber helps food move through your digestive tract and helps keep you regular. Fiber rich foods include: whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
 - b. Potassium has been shown to help lower your blood pressure. The following foods are high in potassium: oranges, bananas, raisins, potatoes, yams, dates, dried or fresh apricots and beans.
- c. Calcium helps with blood clotting, bone and tooth formation and helps your arteries be more flexible. Try to eat 2-3 servings of low fat dairy products per day. Good choices are skim milk, low fat cheese and yogurt. The following chart tells you how much calcium to eat per day.

Recommended Calcium Per Day (Men and Women)

Age in years:	9-18	19-50	51-70	Over 71
Calcium:	1300 mg	1000 mg	1200 mg	1200 mg

6. Be physically active! Participate in daily aerobic exercise like running, brisk walking, or swimming, for at least 30–45 minutes. Add some weight bearing activities like lifting weights, dancing, soccer, volleyball or running to tone muscles and build strong bones.
7. Drink alcohol in moderation.
 - a. Males should drink no more than 2 drinks per day.
 - b. Females (or lighter weight people) should be limited to 1 drink per day.
*1 drink = 12 ounce beer OR 5 ounce glass of wine OR 1.5 ounce 80-proof liquor
8. Consult your doctor about taking medication to lower your blood pressure if it remains high (above 135 mmHG/85 mmHG) after 3 months of following the DASH plan.

For more information about the DASH eating plan, visit the National Institutes of Health website at:
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf