

Health tip: DASH eating plan

DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

The DASH Diet and Pennington Biomedical's studies are supported by a new scientific statement from the American Heart Association. The DASH Diet is an approachable diet for everyone with a proven track record of helping individuals with diabetes and heart disease.¹

DASH was not intended as a weight loss tool; however, because it has an emphasis on real foods, heavy on fruits and vegetables, balanced with the right amount of protein, DASH may be a weight loss solution.

DASH is a flexible and balanced eating plan that helps create a heart-healthy eating style for life.

Includes plenty of:		Limits:
• Vegetables	• Fat free or low fat milk products	• Sodium
• Fruits	• Fish, poultry and lean meats	• Saturated fats
• Whole grains	• Beans, nuts and legumes	• Added sugars

DASH doesn't require any special foods or supplements. It simply calls for a certain number of daily servings from various food groups. The number of servings depends on the number of calories you choose to eat every day. Your caloric needs depend on your age, gender and activity level. You can choose the "regular" DASH plan, which limits your daily sodium intake to around 2300mg or you can choose the lower sodium version, which limits your daily sodium intake to around 1500mg. The less salt you eat, the more you may be able to help lower your blood pressure.²

Daily calorie recommendations for women:

Age (years)	Calories needed per activity level		
	Sedentary	Moderately active	Active
19-30	2,000	2,000-2,200	2,400
31-50	1,800	2,000	2,200
51 +	1,600	1,800	2,000-2,200

Daily calorie recommendations for men:

Age (years)	Calories needed per activity level		
	Sedentary	Moderately active	Active
19-30	2,400	2,600-2,800	3,000
31-50	2,200	2,400-2,600	2,800-3,000
51 +	2,000	2,200-2,400	2,400-2,800



To figure out your caloric needs, you need to consider your age and physical activity level. If you want to maintain your current weight, you should eat only as many calories as you burn by being physically active. If you need to lose weight, you should eat fewer calories than you burn or increase your activity level to burn more calories than you eat.

After figuring out your daily calorie needs, use this table to find the closest calorie level to yours and estimate the number of servings from each food group that you should have. For example, if your daily calorie needs is 2000 calories per day, on the DASH Eating Plan your goal would be 6-8 servings of grains per day, 4-5 servings each of fruits and vegetables per day, 2-3 servings of fat free or low fat dairy products per day, and so on.³

Food groups	1,600 calories	2,000 calories	2,600 calories	Serving sizes	Examples	Why it's important
Grains	6	6-8	10-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • 1 oz dry cereal • ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal 	Whole wheat bread and pasta, pita bread, oatmeal and brown rice	Major source of energy and fiber
Vegetables	3-4	4-5	5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw leafy vegetable • ½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable • ½ cup vegetable juice 	Broccoli, carrots, green beans, kale, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
Fruits	4	4-5	5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 dairy	2-3	2-3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup milk or yogurt • 1½ oz cheese 	Fat-free milk or buttermilk; fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese; fat-free/low-fat regular or frozen yogurt	Major sources of calcium and protein
Lean meats, poultry, fish	3-4 or less	6 or less	6 or less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish • 1 egg 	Select lean meat; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
Nuts, seeds, legumes	3 per week	4-5 per week	1 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup or 1½ oz nuts • 2 Tbsp peanut butter • 2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds • ½ cup cooked dried beans or peas (legumes) 	Almonds, 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	2-3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp soft margarine • 1 tsp vegetable oil • 1 Tbsp mayonnaise • 2 Tbsp salad dressing 	Soft margarine, vegetable oil (canola, corn, olive, safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing	The DASH study had 27% of calories as fat, including fat in or added to foods
Sweets and added sugars	3 or less per week	5 or less per week	≤ 2 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Tbsp sugar • 1 Tbsp jelly or jam • ½ cup sorbet, gelatin dessert • 1 cup lemonade 	Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup and sorbet	Select sweets low in fat content

Servings per day unless noted otherwise.



Following the DASH eating plan is one part of living a heart-healthy lifestyle. Combining the DASH plan with other lifestyle changes, such as physical activity, may help you improve your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight. Other lifestyle changes that may improve your overall health include:

- If you smoke, quit
- Limit alcohol intake
- Get plenty of sleep
- Practice self-care and stress management



Sources:
 1 Pennington Biomedical Research Center, DASH Diet. <https://www.pbrcc.edu/news/media/2023/aharanking.aspx>. May 2023. Accessed October 2023.
 2 Mayo Clinic, DASH diet: Healthy eating to lower your blood pressure. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/dash-diet/art-20048456>. May 2023. Accessed October 2023.
 3 National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, DASH Eating Plan. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>. December 2021. Accessed October 2023.

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