

DASH Diet: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

The DASH diet is an eating plan that can help lower your blood pressure. DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. Hypertension is high blood pressure.

The DASH diet focuses on eating foods that are high in calcium, potassium, and magnesium. These nutrients can lower blood pressure. The foods that are highest in these nutrients are fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, nuts, seeds, and legumes. But taking calcium, potassium, and magnesium supplements instead of eating foods that are high in those nutrients does not have the same effect. The DASH diet also includes whole grains, fish, and poultry.

The DASH diet is one of several lifestyle changes your doctor may recommend to lower your high blood pressure. Your doctor may also want you to decrease the amount of sodium in your diet. Lowering sodium while following the DASH diet can lower blood pressure even further than just the DASH diet alone.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Following the DASH diet

- Eat 4 to 5 servings of fruit each day. A serving is 1 medium-sized piece of fruit, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped or canned fruit, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit, or 4 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of fruit juice. Choose fruit more often than fruit juice.
- Eat 4 to 5 servings of vegetables each day. A serving is 1 cup of lettuce or raw leafy vegetables, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chopped or cooked vegetables, or 4 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of vegetable juice. Choose vegetables more often than vegetable juice.

- Get 2 to 3 servings of low-fat and fat-free dairy each day. A serving is 8 ounces of milk, 1 cup of yogurt, or 1 ½ ounces of cheese.
- Eat 6 to 8 servings of grains each day. A serving is 1 slice of bread, 1 ounce of dry cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice, pasta, or cooked cereal. Try to choose whole-grain products as much as possible.
- Limit lean meat, poultry, and fish to 2 servings each day. A serving is 3 ounces, about the size of a deck of cards.
- Eat 4 to 5 servings of nuts, seeds, and legumes (cooked dried beans, lentils, and split peas) each week. A serving is 1/3 cup of nuts, 2 tablespoons of seeds, or ½ cup of cooked beans or peas.
- Limit fats and oils to 2 to 3 servings each day. A serving is 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil or 2 tablespoons of salad dressing.
- Limit sweets and added sugars to 5 servings or less a week. A serving is 1 tablespoon jelly or jam, ½ cup sorbet, or 1 cup of lemonade.
- Eat less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day. If you limit your sodium to 1,500 mg a day, you can lower your blood pressure even more.

Tips for success

- Start small. Do not try to make dramatic changes to your diet all at once. You might feel that you are missing out on your favorite foods and then be more likely to not follow the plan. Make small changes, and stick with them. Once those changes become habit, add a few more changes.
- Try some of the following:
 - Make it a goal to eat a fruit or vegetable at every meal and at snacks. This will make it easy to get the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day.
 - Try yogurt topped with fruit and nuts for a snack or healthy dessert.
 - Add lettuce, tomato, cucumber, and onion to sandwiches.
 - Combine a ready-made pizza crust with low-fat mozzarella cheese and lots of vegetable toppings. Try using tomatoes, squash, spinach, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and onions.
 - Have a variety of cut-up vegetables with a low-fat dip as an appetizer instead of chips and dip.
 - Sprinkle sunflower seeds or chopped almonds over salads. Or try adding chopped walnuts or almonds to cooked vegetables.
 - Try some vegetarian meals using beans and peas. Add garbanzo or kidney beans to salads. Make burritos and tacos with mashed pinto beans or black beans.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patientEd>

Enter H967 in the search box to learn more about "DASH Diet: Care Instructions".