

DASH Diet Simplified

The **DASH** diet, which stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, is a dietary plan designed to help prevent and control high blood pressure (hypertension). It was developed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) in the United States and **is considered one of the most effective diets for reducing hypertension**. The DASH diet emphasizes the consumption of nutrient-rich foods while reducing sodium (salt) intake. Here are the key principles of the DASH diet:

- 1. Fruits and Vegetables:** The DASH diet encourages a high intake of fruits and vegetables, aiming for several servings each day. These foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants.
- 2. Whole Grains:** Choose whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat bread, and whole grain pasta over refined grains. Whole grains provide more nutrients and fiber.
- 3. Lean Protein:** Include sources of lean protein in your diet, such as poultry, fish, lean cuts of meat, and plant-based options like beans, lentils, and tofu.
- 4. Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes:** Incorporate nuts, seeds, and legumes into your meals and snacks for healthy fats, protein, and fiber.
- 5. Dairy:** Opt for low-fat or fat-free dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese to get the benefits of calcium and protein without excess saturated fat.
- 6. Limit Sweets and Added Sugars:** Minimize your consumption of sweets and added sugars, as they can contribute to weight gain and high blood pressure.
- 7. Reduce Sodium:** The DASH diet recommends limiting sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams per day or ideally 1,500 milligrams for those with high blood pressure. This involves reducing the use of table salt and being mindful of processed and restaurant foods that are often high in sodium.
- 8. Moderate Alcohol:** If you choose to consume alcohol, do so in moderation. This typically means up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.
- 9. Portion Control:** Be mindful of portion sizes to manage calorie intake and maintain a healthy weight. The DASH diet is not only effective for managing blood pressure but also for promoting overall heart health and reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases. It's a balanced and nutritious eating plan that focuses on whole, natural foods and is recommended by healthcare professionals for individuals with hypertension and those looking to improve their dietary habits.

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