Internal & Respiratory Medicine Specialty Clinic

# DASH Diet Information

A plain-language overview of the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating pattern.

DASH is an eating pattern developed to support blood-pressure management. It emphasizes vegetables and fruit, whole grains, lower-fat dairy or alternatives, and a variety of protein foods while limiting sodium and foods high in saturated fat or added sugars.

## THE DASH PATTERN AT A GLANCE

- **Vegetables and fruit:** include a variety across meals and snacks.
- **Whole grains:** choose whole-grain breads, cereals and grains more often.
- **Protein foods:** include beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, fish, poultry and other appropriate protein foods.
- **Lower-fat dairy or alternatives:** include these if they fit your diet and medical needs.
- **Lower-sodium choices:** cook more often, compare food labels, and limit highly processed foods.

## SODIUM

Reducing sodium can help lower blood pressure for many people. Hypertension Canada recommends considering a reduction toward about 2,000 mg of sodium per day for adults with hypertension. Your personal target may be different depending on your health, medications and clinician's advice.

### Ways to reduce sodium:

- Choose fresh or plain frozen foods more often.
- Compare Nutrition Facts labels and choose lower-sodium options.
- Limit processed meats, packaged sauces, instant meals, salty snacks and other high-sodium foods.
- Use herbs, spices, garlic, lemon or vinegar for flavour instead of relying mainly on salt.

## A SIMPLE DASH-STYLE DAY

| | |
|---|---|
| **Breakfast** | Oatmeal or whole-grain cereal, fruit, and plain yogurt or milk/alternative |
| **Lunch** | Vegetable-rich soup or salad with beans, lentils, fish or poultry; whole-grain side |
| **Snack** | Fruit, unsalted nuts, vegetables with hummus, or plain yogurt |
| **Dinner** | Half the plate vegetables, a whole-grain side, and a protein food; use herbs and spices for flavour |

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# DASH Diet Information - Before You Make Changes

## TALK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM IF

• You have kidney disease or have been told to limit potassium or fluids.

• You take medicines that affect blood pressure, potassium or kidney function.

• You have diabetes and use insulin or other medicines that can cause low blood sugar.

• You have heart failure, liver disease, significant food allergies, swallowing problems, or another condition that changes your nutrition needs.

## OTHER BLOOD-PRESSURE HABITS

• Take prescribed medications as directed.

• Be physically active in a way that is safe for you.

• Avoid nicotine and tobacco products.

• If you drink alcohol, follow current Canadian low-risk guidance and your clinician's advice.

• Monitor blood pressure as recommended by your healthcare team.

## Official information

This is an original clinic summary. For comprehensive DASH guidance, see the Heart & Stroke Foundation and Hypertension Canada.

Heart & Stroke Foundation: https://www.heartandstroke.ca/healthy-living/healthy-eating/dash-diet
Hypertension Canada: https://hypertension.ca/guidelines/prevention-treatment/health-behaviour-management

**General information only:** This handout is not a substitute for individualized medical advice.