

What Is the DASH Eating Plan?

Blood pressure can be unhealthy even if it stays only slightly above the normal level of less than 120/80 mmHg. The more your blood pressure rises above normal, the greater the health risk.

Scientists supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) conducted two key studies. Their findings showed that blood pressures were reduced with an eating plan that is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and total fat and that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. This eating plan—known as the DASH eating plan—also includes whole grain products, fish, poultry, and nuts. It is reduced in lean red meat, sweets, added sugars, and sugar-containing beverages compared to the typical American diet. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, and calcium, as well as protein and fiber. (See box 2 for the DASH studies' daily nutrient goals.)

BOX 2

Daily Nutrient Goals Used in the DASH Studies (for a 2,100 Calorie Eating Plan)

Total fat	27% of calories	Sodium	2,300 mg*
Saturated fat	6% of calories	Potassium	4,700 mg
Protein	18% of calories	Calcium	1,250 mg
Carbohydrate	55% of calories	Magnesium	500 mg
Cholesterol	150 mg	Fiber	30 g

* 1,500 mg sodium was a lower goal tested and found to be even better for lowering blood pressure. It was particularly effective for middle-aged and older individuals, African Americans, and those who already had high blood pressure.
g = grams; mg = milligrams

The DASH eating plan follows heart healthy guidelines to limit saturated fat and cholesterol. It focuses on increasing intake of foods rich in nutrients that are expected to lower blood pressure, mainly minerals (like potassium, calcium, and magnesium), protein, and fiber. It includes nutrient-rich foods so that it meets other nutrient requirements as recommended by the Institute of Medicine.

The first DASH study involved 459 adults with systolic blood pressures of less than 160 mmHg and diastolic pressures of 80–95 mmHg. About 27 percent of the participants had high blood pressure. About 50 percent were women and 60 percent were African Americans. It compared three eating plans: a plan that includes foods similar to what many Americans regularly eat; a plan that includes foods similar to what many Americans regularly eat plus more fruits and vegetables; and the DASH eating plan. All three plans included about 3,000 milligrams of sodium daily. None of the plans was vegetarian or used specialty foods.

Results were dramatic. Participants who followed both the plan that included more fruits and vegetables and the DASH eating plan had reduced blood pressure. But the DASH eating plan had the

Who Helped With DASH?

The DASH studies were sponsored by the NHLBI and conducted at four medical centers. There was also a central coordinating center at Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, OR. The four medical centers were: Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA; Duke Hypertension Center and the Sarah W. Stedman Nutrition and Metabolism Center, Durham, NC; Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, MD; and Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Baton Rouge, LA.

greatest effect, especially for those with high blood pressure. Furthermore, the blood pressure reductions came fast—within 2 weeks of starting the plan.

The second DASH study looked at the effect on blood pressure of a reduced dietary sodium intake as participants followed either the DASH eating plan or an eating plan typical of what many Americans consume. This second study involved 412 participants. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two eating plans and then followed for a month at each of the three sodium levels. The three sodium levels were a higher intake of about 3,300 milligrams per day (the level consumed by many Americans), an intermediate intake of about 2,300 milligrams per day, and a lower intake of about 1,500 milligrams per day.

Results showed that reducing dietary sodium lowered blood pressure for both eating plans. At each sodium level, blood pressure was lower on the DASH eating plan than on the other eating plan. The greatest blood pressure reductions were for the DASH eating plan at the sodium intake of 1,500 milligrams per day. Those with high blood pressure saw the greatest reductions, but those with prehypertension also had large decreases.

Together these studies show the importance of lowering sodium intake—whatever your eating plan. For a true winning combination, follow the DASH eating plan and lower your intake of salt and sodium.

How Do I Make the DASH?

The DASH eating plan used in the studies calls for a certain number of daily servings from various food groups. These are given in box 3 on page 8 for 2,000 calories per day. The number of servings you require may vary, depending on your caloric need. Box 4 on page 10 gives the number of servings for 1,600, 2,600, and 3,100 calories.

The DASH eating plan used along with other lifestyle changes can help you prevent and control blood pressure. If your blood pressure is not too high, you may be able to control it entirely by changing your eating habits, losing weight if you are overweight, getting regular physical activity, and cutting down on alcohol. The DASH eating plan also has other benefits, such as lowering LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, which, along with lowering blood pressure, can reduce your risk for getting heart disease.

B O X 3

Following the DASH Eating Plan

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes
Grains*	6–8	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal† 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
Vegetables	4–5	1 cup raw leafy vegetable 1/2 cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable 1/2 cup vegetable juice
Fruits	4–5	1 medium fruit 1/4 cup dried fruit 1/2 cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit 1/2 cup fruit juice
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2–3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1 1/2 oz cheese
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	6 or less	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish 1 egg‡
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	4–5 per week	1/3 cup or 1 1/2 oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp or 1/2 oz seeds 1/2 cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas)
Fats and oils§	2–3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp salad dressing
Sweets and added sugars	5 or less per week	1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jelly or jam 1/2 cup sorbet, gelatin 1 cup lemonade

* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

† Serving sizes vary between 1/2 cup and 1 1/4 cups, depending on cereal type. Check the product's Nutrition Facts label.

The DASH eating plan shown below is based on 2,000 calories a day. The number of daily servings in a food group may vary from those listed depending on your caloric needs. Use this chart to help you plan your menus or take it with you when you go to the store.

Examples and Notes	Significance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Pattern
Whole wheat bread and rolls, whole wheat pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn	Major sources of energy and fiber
Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
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 (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or buttermilk, fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese, fat-free or low-fat regular or frozen yogurt	Major sources of calcium and protein
Select only lean; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
Almonds, hazelnuts, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, kidney beans, lentils, split peas	Rich sources of energy, magnesium, protein, and fiber
Soft margarine, vegetable oil (such as canola, corn, olive, or safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing	The DASH study had 27 percent of calories as fat, including fat in or added to foods
Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup, sorbet and ices, sugar	Sweets should be low in fat

† Since eggs are high in cholesterol, limit egg yolk intake to no more than four per week; two egg whites have the same protein content as 1 oz of meat.

§ Fat content changes serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp of regular salad dressing equals one serving; 1 Tbsp of a low-fat dressing equals one-half serving; 1 Tbsp of a fat-free dressing equals zero servings.

B O X 4

DASH Eating Plan— Number of Daily Servings for Other Calorie Levels

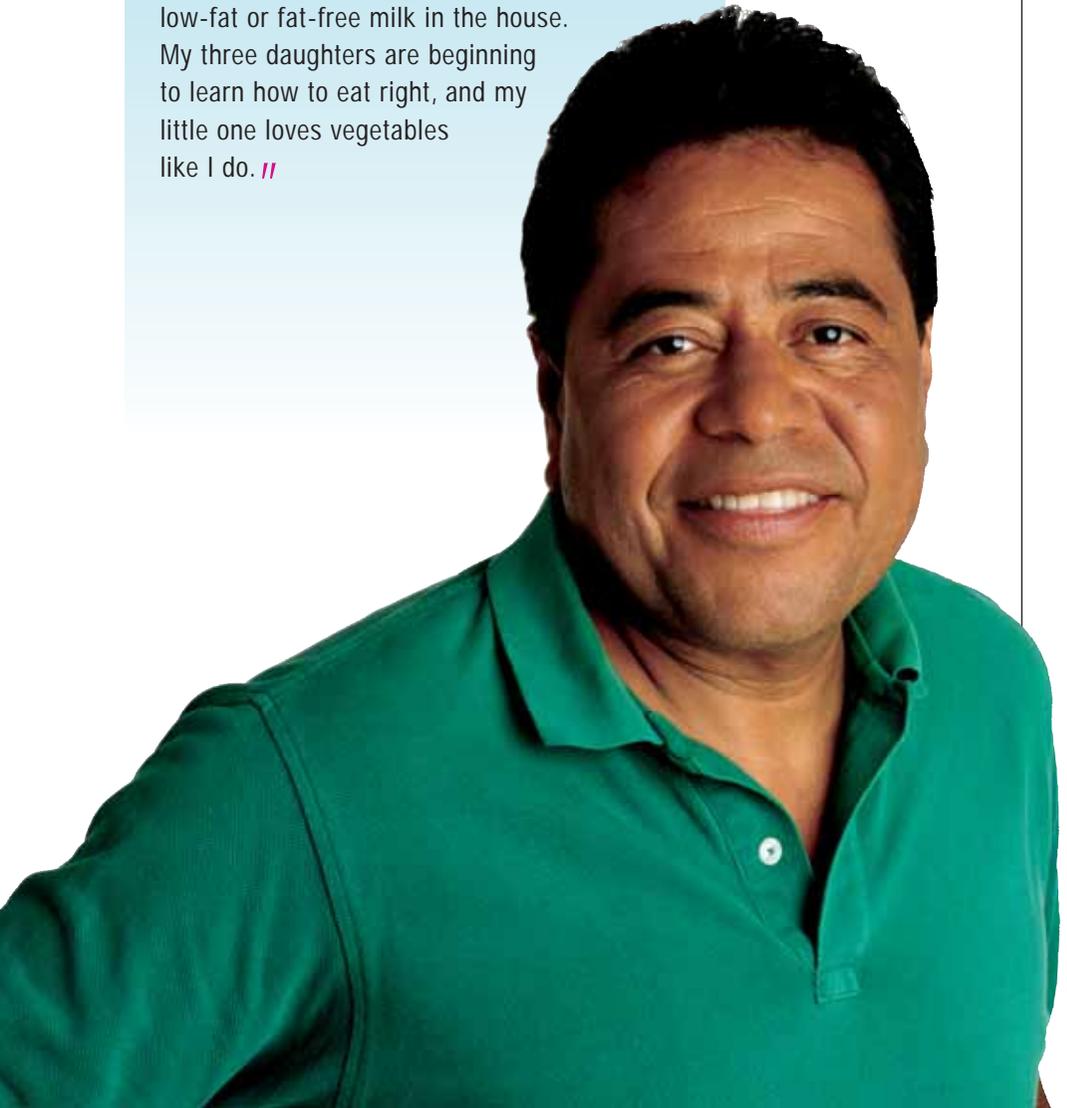
Food Groups	Servings/Day		
	1,600 calories/day	2,600 calories/day	3,100 calories/day
Grains*	6	10–11	12–13
Vegetables	3–4	5–6	6
Fruits	4	5–6	6
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2–3	3	3–4
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	3–6	6	6–9
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3/week	1	1
Fats and oils	2	3	4
Sweets and added sugars	0	≤2	≤2

* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

If you need to lose weight, even a small weight loss will help to lower your risks of developing high blood pressure and other serious health conditions. At the very least, you should not gain weight. A recent study showed that people can lose weight while following the DASH eating plan and lowering their sodium intake. In a study of 810 participants, one-third were taught how to lower their sodium intake and follow the DASH eating plan on their own. Most of them needed to lose weight as well. They followed the DASH eating plan at lower calorie levels and they increased their physical activity. Over the course of 18 months, participants lost weight and improved their blood pressure control.

JOSE HENRIQUEZ

// I was overweight. I was told by my doctor that if I kept it up I was going to develop high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. The doctor sent me to a dietitian. She is the one who taught me the things that I had to do in order to eat right. It was hard at the beginning because once you have bad habits they are hard to break. Once I realized it was for my own good and no one was going to take care of me except me, I decided to start eating better. At home, we keep stuff like fruits, vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free milk in the house. My three daughters are beginning to learn how to eat right, and my little one loves vegetables like I do. //



If you're trying to lose weight, use the foods and serving guidelines in boxes 3 and 4 on pages 8 and 9. Aim for a caloric level that is lower than what you usually consume. In addition, you can make your diet lower in calories by using the tips in box 5. The best way to take off pounds is to do so gradually, get more physical activity, and eat a balanced diet that is lower in calories and fat. For some people at very high risk for heart disease or stroke, medication will be necessary. To develop a weight-loss or weight-maintenance program that works well for you, consult with your doctor or registered dietitian.

Combining the DASH eating plan with a regular physical activity program, such as walking or swimming, will help you both shed pounds and stay trim for the long term. You can do an activity for 30 minutes at one time, or choose shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. (See box 6 on page 14.) The important thing is to total about 30 minutes of activity each day. (To avoid weight gain, try to total about 60 minutes per day.)

You should be aware that the DASH eating plan has more daily servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods than you may be used to eating. Because the plan is high in fiber, it can cause bloating and diarrhea in some persons. To avoid these problems, gradually increase your intake of fruit, vegetables, and whole grain foods.

This booklet gives menus and recipes from the DASH studies for both 2,300 and 1,500 milligrams of daily sodium intake. Twenty-three hundred milligrams of sodium equals about 6 grams, or 1 teaspoon, of table salt (sodium chloride); 1,500 milligrams of sodium equals about 4 grams, or $\frac{2}{3}$ teaspoon, of table salt.

The key to reducing salt intake is making wise food choices. Only a small amount of salt that we consume comes from the salt added at the table, and only small amounts of sodium occur naturally in food. Processed foods account for most of the salt and sodium Americans consume. So, be sure to read food labels to choose products lower in sodium. You may be surprised to find which foods have sodium. They include baked goods, certain cereals, soy sauce, seasoned salts, monosodium glutamate (MSG), baking soda, and some antacids—the range is wide.

B O X 5

How to Lower Calories on the DASH Eating Plan

The DASH eating plan can be adopted to promote weight loss. It is rich in lower-calorie foods, such as fruits and vegetables. You can make it lower in calories by replacing higher calorie foods such as sweets with more fruits and vegetables—and that also will make it easier for you to reach your DASH goals. Here are some examples:

To increase fruits—

- Eat a medium apple instead of four shortbread cookies. *You'll save 80 calories.*
- ~~Eat 1/4 cup of dried apricots instead of a 2-ounce bag of pork rinds. *You'll save 230 calories.*~~

To increase vegetables—

- Have a hamburger that's 3 ounces of meat instead of 6 ounces. Add a 1/2-cup serving of carrots and a 1/2-cup serving of spinach. *You'll save more than 200 calories.*
- Instead of 5 ounces of chicken, have a stir fry with 2 ounces of chicken and 1 1/2 cups of raw vegetables. Use a small amount of vegetable oil. *You'll save 50 calories.*

To increase fat-free or low-fat milk products—

- Have a 1/2-cup serving of low-fat frozen yogurt instead of a 1/2-cup serving of full-fat ice cream. *You'll save about 70 calories.*

And don't forget these calorie-saving tips:

- Use fat-free or low-fat condiments.
- Use half as much vegetable oil, soft or liquid margarine, mayonnaise, or salad dressing, or choose available low-fat or fat-free versions.
- Eat smaller portions—cut back gradually.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Check the food labels to compare fat content in packaged foods—items marked fat-free or low-fat are not always lower in calories than their regular versions.
- Limit foods with lots of added sugar, such as pies, flavored yogurts, candy bars, ice cream, sherbet, regular soft drinks, and fruit drinks.
- Eat fruits canned in their own juice or in water.
- Add fruit to plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- Snack on fruit, vegetable sticks, unbuttered and unsalted popcorn, or rice cakes.
- Drink water or club soda—zest it up with a wedge of lemon or lime.

B O X 6

Make a Dash for DASH

Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day can help.

- If your blood pressure is moderately elevated, 30 minutes of brisk walking on most days a week may be enough to keep you off medication.
- If you take medication for high blood pressure, 30 minutes of moderate physical activity can make your medication work more effectively and make you feel better.
- If you don't have high blood pressure, being physically active can help keep it that way. If you have normal blood pressure—but are not active—your chances of developing high blood pressure increase, especially as you get older or if you become overweight or obese or develop diabetes.

Getting started: Your physical activity program can be as simple as a 15-minute walk around the block each morning and evening. Gradually build up your program and set new goals to stay motivated. The important thing is to find something you enjoy, and do it safely. And remember—trying too hard at first can lead to injury and cause you to give up. If you have a chronic health problem or a family history of heart disease at an early age, be sure to talk with your doctor before launching a new physical activity program.

1. **Set a schedule and try to keep it.**
2. **Get a friend or family member to join you.** Motivate each other to keep it up.
3. **Cross-train.** Alternate between different activities so you don't strain one part of your body day after day.
4. **Set goals.**
5. **Reward yourself.** At the end of each month that you stay on your exercise program, reward yourself with something new—new clothes, a compact disc, a new book—something that will help keep you committed. But don't use food as a reward.

Because it is rich in fruits and vegetables, which are naturally lower in sodium than many other foods, the DASH eating plan makes it easier to consume less salt and sodium. Still, you may want to begin by adopting the DASH eating plan at the level of 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day and then further lower your sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams per day.

Boxes 7, 8, and 9 on pages 16–18 offer tips on how to reduce the salt and sodium content in your diet, and boxes 10 and 11 on pages 19 and 20 show how to use food labels to find lower sodium products.

The DASH eating plan also emphasizes potassium from food, especially fruits and vegetables, to help keep blood pressure levels healthy. A potassium-rich diet may help to reduce elevated or high blood pressure, but be sure to get your potassium from food sources, not from supplements. Many fruits and vegetables, some milk products, and fish are rich sources of potassium. (See box 12 on page 21.) However, fruits and vegetables are rich in the form of potassium (potassium with bicarbonate precursors) that favorably affects acid-base metabolism. This form of potassium may help to reduce risk of kidney stones and bone loss. While salt substitutes containing potassium are sometimes needed by persons on drug therapy for high blood pressure, these supplements can be harmful to people with certain medical conditions. Ask your doctor before trying salt substitutes or supplements.

Start the DASH eating plan today—it can help you prevent and control high blood pressure, has other health benefits for your heart, can be used to lose weight, and meets your nutritional needs.



B O X 7

Where's the Sodium?

Only a small amount of sodium occurs naturally in foods. Most sodium is added during processing. The table below gives examples of sodium in some foods.

Food Groups	Sodium (mg)
Whole and other grains and grain products*	
Cooked cereal, rice, pasta, unsalted, 1/2 cup	0–5
Ready-to-eat cereal, 1 cup	0–360
Bread, 1 slice	110–175
Vegetables	
Fresh or frozen, cooked without salt, 1/2 cup	1–70
Canned or frozen with sauce, 1/2 cup	140–460
Tomato juice, canned, 1/2 cup	330
Fruit	
Fresh, frozen, canned, 1/2 cup	0–5
Low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products	
Milk, 1 cup	107
Yogurt, 1 cup	175
Natural cheeses, 1 1/2 oz	110–450
Process cheeses, 2 oz	600
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	
Peanuts, salted, 1/3 cup	120
Peanuts, unsalted, 1/3 cup	0–5
Beans, cooked from dried or frozen, without salt, 1/2 cup	0–5
Beans, canned, 1/2 cup	400
Lean meats, fish, and poultry	
Fresh meat, fish, poultry, 3 oz	30–90
Tuna canned, water pack, no salt added, 3 oz	35–45
Tuna canned, water pack, 3 oz	230–350
Ham, lean, roasted, 3 oz	1,020

* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings.

B O X 8

Tips To Reduce Salt and Sodium

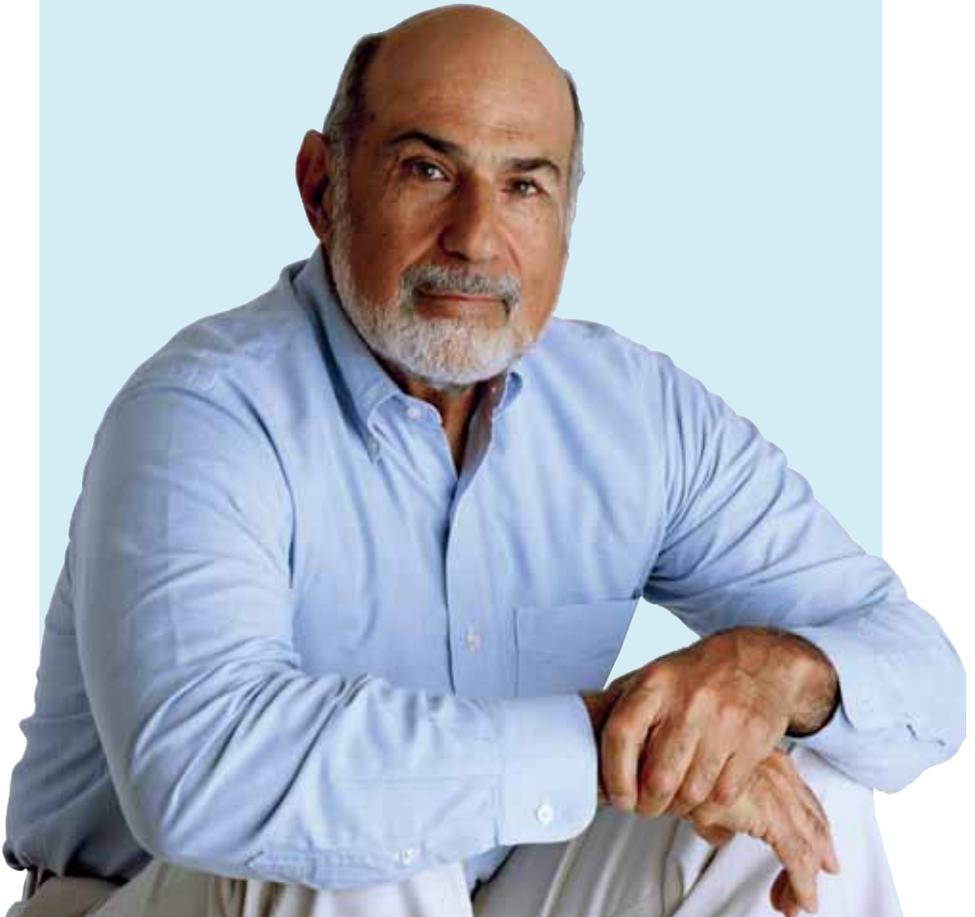
- Choose low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods and condiments when available.
- Choose fresh, frozen, or canned (low-sodium or no-salt-added) vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked, or processed types.
- Choose ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that are lower in sodium.
- Limit cured foods (such as bacon and ham); foods packed in brine (such as pickles, pickled vegetables, olives, and sauerkraut); and condiments (such as mustard, horseradish, ketchup, and barbecue sauce). Limit even lower sodium versions of soy sauce and teriyaki sauce. Treat these condiments sparingly as you do table salt.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.
- Choose “convenience” foods that are lower in sodium. Cut back on frozen dinners, mixed dishes such as pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings—these often have a lot of sodium.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna and canned beans, to remove some of the sodium.
- Use spices instead of salt. In cooking and at the table, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends. Start by cutting salt in half.



B O X 9

Reducing Salt and Sodium When Eating Out

- Ask how foods are prepared. Ask that they be prepared without added salt, MSG, or salt-containing ingredients. Most restaurants are willing to accommodate requests.
- Know the terms that indicate high sodium content: pickled, cured, smoked, soy sauce, broth.
- Move the salt shaker away.
- Limit condiments, such as mustard, ketchup, pickles, and sauces with salt-containing ingredients.
- Choose fruit or vegetables, instead of salty snack foods.



BOX 10

Compare Nutrition Facts Labels on Foods

Read the Nutrition Facts labels on foods to compare the amount of sodium in products. Look for the sodium content in milligrams and the Percent Daily Value. Aim for foods that are less than 5 percent of the Daily Value of sodium. Foods with 20 percent or more Daily Value of sodium are considered high. You can also check out the amounts of the other DASH goal nutrients.

Compare the food labels of these two versions of canned tomatoes. The regular canned tomatoes (right) have 15 times as much sodium as the low-sodium canned tomatoes.

Low-Sodium Canned Diced Tomatoes

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)	
Servings Per Container 3 1/2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	1%
Potassium 270mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugar 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 5%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

Canned Diced Tomatoes

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)	
Servings Per Container 3 1/2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Potassium 230mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugar 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 5%	Vitamin C 20%
Calcium 4%	Iron 6%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

B O X 1 2

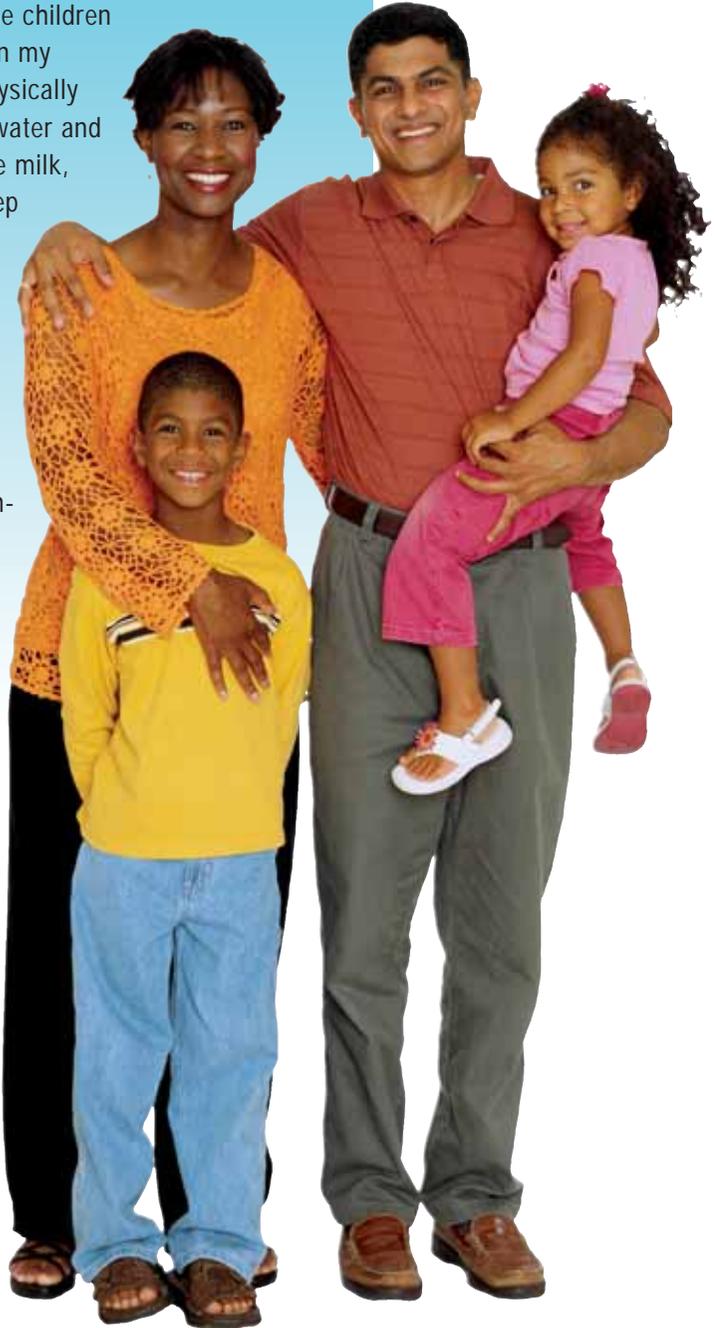
Where's the Potassium?

Potassium comes from a variety of food sources. The table below gives examples of potassium in some foods.

Food Groups	Potassium (mg)
Vegetables	
Potato, 1 medium	926
Sweet Potato, 1 medium	540
Spinach, cooked, 1/2 cup	290
Zucchini, cooked, 1/2 cup	280
Tomato, fresh, 1/2 cup	210
Kale, cooked, 1/2 cup	150
Romaine lettuce, 1 cup	140
Mushrooms, 1/2 cup	110
Cucumber, 1/2 cup	80
Fruit	
Banana, 1 medium	420
Apricots, 1/4 cup	380
Orange, 1 medium	237
Cantaloupe chunks, 1/2 cup	214
Apple, 1 medium	150
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	
Cooked soybeans, 1/2 cup	440
Cooked lentils, 1/2 cup	370
Cooked kidney beans, 1/2 cup	360
Cooked split peas, 1/2 cup	360
Almonds, roasted, 1/3 cup	310
Walnuts, roasted, 1/3 cup	190
Sunflower seeds, roasted, 2 Tbsp	124
Peanuts, roasted, 1/3 cup	120
Low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products	
Milk, 1 cup	380
Yogurt, 1 cup	370
Lean meats, fish, and poultry	
Fish (cod, halibut, rockfish, trout, tuna), 3 oz	200–400
Pork tenderloin, 3 oz	370
Beef tenderloin, chicken, turkey, 3 oz	210

JEANETTE GUYTON-KRISHNAN
AND FAMILY

// There's a history of cardiovascular disease in my family and I also know that good habits can start when the children are very young. In my family, we are physically active, we drink water and low-fat or fat-free milk, and we rarely keep sugary snacks in the house. I'm also very aware of portion sizes and how many calories are in the portions we eat. We are teaching them good eating habits right now. //



How Can I Get Started on the DASH Eating Plan?

It's easy. Reading the "Getting Started" suggestions in box 13 should help you along the way. The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. One way to begin is by seeing how DASH compares with your current food habits. Use the "What's On Your Plate?" form. (See box 14 on page 26.) Fill it in for 1–2 days and see how it compares with the DASH plan. This will help you see what changes you need to make in your food choices.

Remember that on some days the foods you eat may add up to more than the recommended servings from one food group and less from another. Similarly, you may have too much sodium on a particular day. But don't worry. Try your best to keep the average of several days close to the DASH eating plan and the sodium level recommended for you.

Use the menus that begin on page 30 if you want to follow the menus similar to those used in the DASH trial—or make up your own using your favorite foods. In fact, your entire family can eat meals using the DASH eating plan. Use box 3 on page 8 to choose your favorite foods from each food group based on your calorie needs as described in the 2005 "U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans."

The Dietary Guidelines determined that the DASH eating plan is an example of a healthy eating plan and recommends it as a plan that not only meets your nutritional needs but can accommodate varied types of cuisines and special needs.

Remember that the DASH eating plan used along with other lifestyle changes can help you prevent and control your blood pressure. Important lifestyle recommendations for you include: achieve and maintain a healthy weight, participate in your favorite regular physical activity, and, if you drink, use moderation in alcohol consumption (defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men).

One important note: If you take medication to control high blood pressure, you should not stop using it. Follow the DASH eating plan and talk with your doctor about your medication treatment. The tips in box 15 on page 27 can help you continue to follow the DASH eating plan and make other healthy lifestyle changes for a lifetime.

Getting Started

It's easy to adopt the DASH eating plan. Here are some ways to get started:

Change gradually

- If you now eat one or two vegetables a day, add a serving at lunch and another at dinner.
- If you don't eat fruit now or have juice only at breakfast, add a serving to your meals or have it as a snack.
- Gradually increase your use of fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products to three servings a day. For example, drink milk with lunch or dinner, instead of soda, sugar-sweetened tea, or alcohol. Choose fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent) milk and milk products to reduce your intake of saturated fat, total fat, cholesterol, and calories and to increase your calcium.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label on margarines and salad dressings to choose those lowest in saturated fat and trans fat.

Treat meats as one part of the whole meal, instead of the focus

- Limit lean meats to 6 ounces a day—all that's needed. Have only 3 ounces at a meal, which is about the size of a deck of cards.
- If you now eat large portions of meats, cut them back gradually—by a half or a third at each meal.
- Include two or more vegetarian-style (meatless) meals each week.
- Increase servings of vegetables, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and cooked dry beans in meals. Try casseroles, whole wheat pasta, and stir-fry dishes, which have less meat and more vegetables, grains, and dry beans.

Use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and calories as desserts and snacks

- Fruits and other lower fat foods offer great taste and variety. Use fruits canned in their own juice or packed in water. Fresh fruits require little or no preparation. Dried fruits are a good choice to carry with you or to have ready in the car.
- Try these snacks ideas: unsalted rice cakes; nuts mixed with raisins; graham crackers; fat-free and low-fat yogurt and frozen yogurt; popcorn with no salt or butter added; raw vegetables.

Try these other tips

- Choose whole grain foods for most grain servings to get added nutrients, such as minerals and fiber. For example, choose whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals.
- If you have trouble digesting milk and milk products, try taking lactase enzyme pills (available at drugstores and groceries) with the milk products. Or, buy lactose-free milk, which has the lactase enzyme already added to it.
- If you are allergic to nuts, use seeds or legumes (cooked dried beans or peas).
- Use fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables and fruits.

Use the form in box 14 to track your food and physical activities habits before you start on the DASH eating plan or to see how you're doing after a few weeks. To record more than 1 day, just copy the form. Total each day's food groups and compare what you ate with the DASH eating plan. To see how the form looks completed, check the menus that start on page 30.



B O X 1 4

What's on Your Plate? How Much Are You Moving?

Date:		Number of Servings by DASH Food Group								
Food	Amount (serving size)	Sodium (mg)	Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Milk Products	Meats, fish, and poultry	Nuts, seeds, and legumes	Fats and oils	Sweets and added sugars
Example: whole wheat bread, with soft (tub) margarine	2 slices 2 tsp	299 52	2						2	
Breakfast										
Lunch										
Dinner										
Snacks										
Day's Totals										
Compare yours with the DASH eating plan at 2,000 calories.		2,300 or 1,500 mg per day	6–8 per day	4–5 per day	4–5 per day	2–3 per day	6 or less per day	4–5 per week	2–3 per day	5 or less per week
Physical Activity Log Record your minutes per day for each activity. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week.										

BOX 15

Making the DASH to Good Health

The DASH plan is a new way of eating—for a lifetime. If you slip from the eating plan for a few days, don't let it keep you from reaching your health goals. Get back on track. Here's how:

Ask yourself why you got off-track.

Was it at a party? Were you feeling stress at home or work? Find out what triggered your sidetrack and start again with the DASH plan.

Don't worry about a slip.

Everyone slips—especially when learning something new. Remember that changing your lifestyle is a long-term process.

See if you tried to do too much at once.

Often, those starting a new lifestyle try to change too much at once. Instead, change one or two things at a time. Slowly but surely is the best way to succeed.

Break the process down into small steps.

This not only keeps you from trying to do too much at once, but also keeps the changes simpler. Break complex goals into smaller, simpler steps, each of which is attainable.

Write it down.

Use the table in box 14 to keep track of what you eat and what you're doing. This can help you find the problem. Keep track for several days. You may find, for instance, that you eat high-fat foods while watching television. If so, you could start keeping a substitute snack on hand to eat instead of the high-fat foods. This record also helps you be sure you're getting enough of each food group and physical activity each day.

Celebrate success.

Treat yourself to a nonfood treat for your accomplishments.

