

DASH

A diet that actually works?



The search for the right diet can be a bit overwhelming. It seems that a new diet, with accompanying book and celebrity endorsement hits the scene every week. Very few, however, have been studied to see how and even if, they actually do what they claim. One notable exception is the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan. The DASH diet has been tested successfully by researchers since the late 1990s as a way to lower blood pressure. DASH emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy and is low in meats, sugar-sweetened beverages, and saturated fat, making it an overall healthful way of eating for people with and without high blood pressure. Want to see if DASH is right for you? Get started with these key parts of the DASH eating plan.



Increase your fruits and vegetables.

The DASH plan calls for 8-10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, which is substantially more than the average American currently gets. Increasing your intake provides key nutrients thought to play a role in DASH's success - potassium, magnesium and fiber.



Don't skip the dairy.

If you haven't been getting your 2-3 servings of low-fat dairy since you drank milk with lunch in school, it may be time to reconnect with this food group. Calcium is another nutrient thought to help with DASH's beneficial effect on blood pressure.



Bring on the nuts and seeds.

In addition to protein, fiber, and magnesium, nuts provide an antioxidant that may work to lower high blood pressure. Aim for 4-5 servings per week to take advantage of this benefit.

Ready to take on the full DASH plan? Head to www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash/ for all the details.



REFERENCES:

1. Appel LJ, Moore TJ, Obarzanek E, Vollmer WM, Svetkey LP, Sacks FM, Bray GA, Vogt TM, Cutler JA, Windhauser MM, Lin PH, Karanja N. A clinical trial of the effects of dietary patterns on blood pressure. DASH Collaborative Research Group. *N Engl J Med.* 1997 Apr 17;336(16):1117-24.
2. Lin PH, Allen JD, Li YJ, Yu M, Lien LF, Svetkey LP. Blood Pressure-Lowering Mechanisms of the DASH Dietary Pattern. *J Nutr Metab.* 2012;2012:472396.