

The Complete DASH Diet Handbook

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

By My Diet Coach | mydiet.coach

Clinically Proven | Heart-Healthy | Doctor Recommended

Chapter 1: Understanding the DASH Diet

The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) was developed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) specifically to help lower blood pressure. Clinical trials have shown it can reduce systolic blood pressure by 8-14 mmHg.

The DASH diet emphasizes foods rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, fiber, and protein while limiting sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. It is consistently ranked as one of the best overall diets by U.S. News & World Report.

Clinical Evidence

The original DASH trial, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, showed that the DASH diet lowered blood pressure within just two weeks of starting, even without reducing sodium intake.

Daily Serving Recommendations (2,000 calories)

- Grains: 6-8 servings (focus on whole grains)
- Vegetables: 4-5 servings
- Fruits: 4-5 servings
- Low-fat dairy: 2-3 servings
- Lean meats, poultry, fish: 6 or fewer servings
- Nuts, seeds, legumes: 4-5 servings per week
- Fats and oils: 2-3 servings
- Sweets: 5 or fewer servings per week

Chapter 2: Health Benefits Beyond Blood Pressure

While the DASH diet was designed to lower blood pressure, research has revealed numerous additional health benefits:

- Blood Pressure: Reduces systolic BP by 8-14 mmHg on average.
- Heart Disease: Lowers risk of heart attack and stroke by up to 20%.
- Kidney Health: Reduces risk of kidney stones and chronic kidney disease.
- Weight Loss: Promotes healthy weight management through nutrient-dense foods.
- Diabetes Prevention: Improves insulin sensitivity and blood sugar control.
- Bone Health: High calcium and vitamin D intake supports strong bones.
- Cancer Risk: Associated with lower risk of colorectal and breast cancer.

Mayo Clinic Recommendation

The DASH diet is clinically proven to prevent and manage high blood pressure. The Mayo Clinic recommends it as a first-line dietary intervention before medication.

Chapter 3: Sodium Guidelines

The DASH diet comes in two sodium versions:

Standard DASH: Up to 2,300 mg sodium per day

This is the standard recommendation and matches the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Most people should start here.

Lower-Sodium DASH: Up to 1,500 mg sodium per day

This version provides even greater blood pressure reduction. Recommended for those with existing hypertension or at high cardiovascular risk.

Tips to Reduce Sodium

- Read nutrition labels and choose low-sodium options.
- Cook at home more often to control salt content.
- Use herbs, spices, lemon, and vinegar instead of salt for flavor.
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables to remove excess sodium.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables over canned when possible.
- Limit processed meats, fast food, and restaurant meals.

Chapter 4: 7-Day DASH Meal Plan

Monday

Breakfast: Oatmeal with banana, walnuts, and skim milk

Lunch: Turkey and avocado wrap with mixed greens and low-fat yogurt

Dinner: Baked chicken breast with steamed broccoli and brown rice

Tuesday

Breakfast: Whole grain toast with almond butter and sliced strawberries

Lunch: Black bean soup with whole grain crackers and side salad

Dinner: Grilled fish tacos with cabbage slaw and lime

Wednesday

Breakfast: Greek yogurt parfait with granola, blueberries, and honey

Lunch: Quinoa bowl with roasted vegetables, chickpeas, and tahini

Dinner: Lean beef stir-fry with bell peppers, snap peas, and brown rice

Thursday

Breakfast: Smoothie with banana, spinach, skim milk, and flaxseed

Lunch: Mediterranean salad with grilled chicken and whole wheat pita

Dinner: Baked salmon with sweet potato and steamed green beans

Friday

Breakfast: Whole grain cereal with fresh berries and low-fat milk

Lunch: Lentil and vegetable soup with whole grain bread

Dinner: Herb-roasted chicken thighs with roasted root vegetables

Saturday

Breakfast: Vegetable omelet with whole wheat toast and fresh fruit

Lunch: Grilled chicken Caesar salad (light dressing) with whole grain roll

Dinner: Shrimp and vegetable pasta with marinara sauce

Sunday

Breakfast: Whole wheat pancakes with fresh berries and maple syrup

Lunch: Tuna salad sandwich on whole grain bread with vegetable soup

Dinner: Roasted pork tenderloin with mashed sweet potatoes and asparagus

Chapter 5: DASH Diet Shopping List

Fruits

Bananas, oranges, apples, berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries), grapes, melons, peaches, pears, dried apricots

Vegetables

Broccoli, spinach, kale, carrots, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, bell peppers, green beans, peas, squash, cauliflower

Grains

Whole wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain pasta, quinoa, whole grain crackers, barley, whole wheat tortillas

Dairy

Skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt, low-fat cheese, cottage cheese

Proteins

Skinless chicken breast, turkey, salmon, tuna, lean beef, eggs, tofu, beans, lentils, chickpeas

Nuts & Seeds

Almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, flaxseed, peanut butter (unsalted)

Pantry

Olive oil, canola oil, low-sodium broth, canned beans (no salt added), herbs and spices, vinegar, garlic

Take Control of Your Heart Health

Visit mydiet.coach for personalized DASH diet meal plans, blood pressure tracking tools, and 24/7 AI coaching to support your heart-healthy journey.

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