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— FAMILY MEDICINE —



LIFELONG HEALTH HUB

The DASH Eating Plan

A practical guide to eating for healthy blood pressure — built around vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and modest sodium.



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🇨🇦 General guidance based on Canadian and international nutrition evidence — not personal medical advice. Discuss changes with your physician.

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1 What is the DASH plan?

DASH stands for *Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension*. It is a flexible, balanced way of eating designed to support healthy blood pressure — and overall heart health. The pattern centres on **vegetables, fruit, and whole grains**, with modest amounts of lean protein and low-fat dairy, while keeping sodium and saturated fat in check.

Unlike a short-term diet, DASH is meant to become a sustainable eating style. You do not need special products — just everyday foods chosen thoughtfully.

2 Why it may help you



Lower blood pressure — for some people, as much as one blood-pressure medication



Less sodium — while boosting potassium, magnesium, and fibre



Heart-friendly — may also support cholesterol and overall cardiovascular health



Flexible — no food group is eliminated; portions and choices matter most

3 Daily servings at a glance

Targets below are for about **2,000 calories per day**. Your needs may differ — ask your doctor or dietitian what calorie level fits you.

Food group	Servings per day	What it gives you
Grains (mostly whole)	6–8	Fibre, B vitamins, steady energy
Vegetables	4–5	Potassium, magnesium, fibre
Fruit	4–5	Potassium, vitamins, natural sweetness
Low-fat dairy	2–3	Calcium, protein
Lean meat, poultry, fish	6 oz or fewer	Protein (1 oz = 1 serving)
Nuts, seeds, legumes	4–5 per week	Healthy fats, plant protein, fibre
Fats & oils	2–3	Small amounts of heart-healthy fats
Sweets & added sugars	5 or fewer per week	Kept occasional, not daily

Source: adapted from NHLBI DASH Eating Plan guidelines.



4 What counts as one serving?

Group	One serving looks like...
Grains	1 slice bread · ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal · 1 oz dry cereal
Vegetables	1 cup raw leafy greens · ½ cup chopped raw or cooked veg · ½ cup low-sodium vegetable juice
Fruit	1 medium fruit · ½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit · ½ cup 100% fruit juice
Dairy	1 cup skim or 1% milk or yogurt · 1½ oz low-fat cheese
Protein	1 oz cooked meat, poultry, or fish · 1 egg · ½ cup nuts · 2 tbsp peanut butter · ½ cup cooked beans
Fats & oils	1 tsp soft margarine or oil · 1 tbsp low-fat mayo · 2 tbsp light salad dressing
Sweets	1 tbsp sugar or jam · ½ cup sorbet · 1 cup unsweetened lemonade (limit added sugar)

5 Sodium — how low should you go?

Standard DASH: up to **2,300 mg sodium per day** (about 1 teaspoon of salt) — aligned with general Canadian guidance.

Lower-sodium DASH: **1,500 mg per day** may lower blood pressure further. This can be especially helpful if you already have high blood pressure — but check with your doctor first, especially if you take certain medications or have kidney disease.

6 Build your plate

✓ Emphasize

- Vegetables & fruit at most meals
- Whole grains over refined
- Skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt
- Fish, poultry, beans, nuts
- Herbs, spices, lemon — instead of extra salt

➤ Limit

- Processed meats & fatty red meat
- Full-fat cheese & cream
- Fast food & heavily salted packaged foods
- Sugary drinks & frequent desserts
- Tropical oils (coconut, palm)



A DASH-style plate: plenty of produce, whole grains, and lean protein.





7 Three sample days to inspire you

Each day is roughly 2,000 calories or less with sodium under 2,300 mg. Swap items to match your tastes and culture.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
BREAKFAST Oatmeal with raisins & banana, skim milk, tea or water	BREAKFAST Mixed melon & grapes, whole-wheat bagel with peanut butter, skim milk	BREAKFAST Whole-grain toast with avocado, tomato & a poached egg
LUNCH Hummus plate: peppers, cucumber, carrots, falafel, whole-grain pita	LUNCH Spinach salad with pear, mandarin oranges, grilled chicken, light vinaigrette	LUNCH Low-sodium tuna salad with celery & pepper on whole-grain crackers
DINNER Baked salmon (4 oz) with roasted vegetables	DINNER Whole-wheat pasta with marinara, zucchini & spinach	DINNER Vegetable stir-fry (broccoli, peppers, mushrooms) with brown rice
SNACK Low-fat yogurt & a peach	SNACK Unsalted trail mix & skim milk	SNACK Almonds & a fresh peach

Getting started

- Add one extra vegetable serving per day
- Choose whole-grain bread, rice, and pasta
- Read labels — compare sodium in similar products
- Cook more meals at home; restaurant food is often salt-heavy
- Pair DASH with regular activity and a healthy weight

Talk to your physician if...

- You have **high blood pressure** or take blood-pressure medication
- You have **kidney disease** — potassium and sodium advice may differ
- You are unsure which sodium target is right for you
- You want help personalizing portions to your calorie needs

Disclaimer: This guide provides general health information adapted from publicly available DASH nutrition resources. It is not medical advice. Individual needs vary — especially with kidney disease, diabetes, or heart failure. Always discuss dietary changes with your physician or a registered dietitian.

References

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Sample menus adapted and reworded from public DASH materials · © Omotoso Family Medicine

