

## High Blood Pressure

# Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations

A healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons you have to fight cardiovascular disease. It's not as hard as you may think! Remember, it is the overall pattern of the choices you make that counts.

Make the simple steps below part of your life for long-term benefits to your health and your heart.

### **Use up at least as many calories as you take in**

Start by knowing [how many calories](#) you should be eating and drinking to maintain your weight. Don't eat more calories than you know you can burn up every day. Increase the amount and intensity of your physical activity to match the number of calories you take in. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week or — best of all — at least 30 minutes every day. Regular physical activity can help you maintain your weight, keep off weight that you lose and help you reach physical and cardiovascular fitness. If you can't do at least 30 minutes at one time, you can add up 10-minute sessions throughout the day.

### **Eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups**

You may be eating plenty of food, but your body may not be getting the nutrients it needs to be healthy. Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but are lower in calories. To get the nutrients you

need, choose foods like vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and fat-free or low-fat dairy products most often.

- [Vegetables and fruits](#) are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber — and they're low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and your blood pressure.
- Unrefined [whole-grain foods](#) contain fiber that can help lower your blood cholesterol and help you feel full, which may help you manage your weight.
- Eat [fish](#) at least twice a week. Recent research shows that eating oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (for example, salmon, trout, and herring) may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.

### **Eat less of the nutrient-poor foods**

There is a right number of calories to eat each day based on your age and physical activity level and whether you are trying to gain, lose or maintain your weight. You could use your daily allotment of calories on a few high-calorie foods and beverages, but you probably wouldn't get the nutrients your body needs to be healthy. Limit foods and beverages that are high in calories but low in nutrients, and limit how much saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium you eat. Read labels carefully — the Nutrition Facts panel will tell you how much of those nutrients each food or beverage contains.

As you make daily food choices, base your eating pattern on these [recommendations](#):

- Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat.

- Select fat-free, 1 percent fat, and low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.
- Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day.
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man.
- Follow the American Heart Association recommendations [when you eat out](#), and keep an eye on your portion sizes.

### High blood pressure (hypertension) Self-care

Lifestyle changes can help you control and prevent high blood pressure — even if you're taking blood pressure medication. Here's what you can do:

- **Eat healthy foods.** Try the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods. Get plenty of potassium, which can help prevent and control high blood pressure. Eat less saturated fat and total fat. Limit the amount of sodium in your diet. Although 2,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day is the current limit for otherwise healthy adults, limiting sodium intake to 1,500 mg a day will have a more dramatic effect on your blood pressure.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** If you're overweight, losing even 5 pounds can lower your blood pressure.

- **Increase physical activity.** Regular physical activity can help lower your blood pressure and keep your weight under control. Strive for at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day.
- **Limit alcohol.** Even if you're healthy, alcohol can raise your blood pressure. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation — up to one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men.
- **Don't smoke.** Tobacco injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries. If you smoke, ask your doctor to help you quit.
- **Manage stress.** Reduce stress as much as possible. Practice healthy coping techniques, such as muscle relaxation and deep breathing. Getting plenty of sleep can help, too.
- **Practice slow, deep breathing.** Do it on your own or try device-guided paced breathing. In various clinical trials, regular use of Resperate — an over-the-counter device approved by the Food and Drug Administration to analyze breathing patterns and help guide inhalation and exhalation — significantly lowered blood pressure.

## Healthier Eating with DASH

### The DASH Eating Plan

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.

Food Group	Daily Servings (except	Serving Sizes
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	as noted)	
<i>Grains &amp; grain products</i>	7-8	1 slice bread 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal* $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
<i>Vegetables</i>	4-5	1 cup raw leafy vegetable $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked vegetable 6 ounces vegetable juice
<i>Fruits</i>	4-5	1 medium fruit $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit 6 ounces fruit juice
<i>Lowfat or fat free dairy foods</i>	2-3	8 ounces milk 1 cup yogurt 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces cheese
<i>Lean meats, poultry, and fish</i>	2 or less	3 ounces cooked lean meats, skinless poultry, or fish
<i>Nuts, seeds, and dry beans</i>	4-5 per week	$\frac{1}{3}$ cup or 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces nuts 1 tablespoon or $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked dry beans
<i>Fats &amp; oils**</i>	2-3	1 teaspoon soft margarine 1 tablespoon lowfat mayonnaise 2 tablespoons light salad dressing 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
<i>Sweets</i>	5 per week	1 tablespoon sugar 1 tablespoon jelly or jam

1/2 ounce jelly beans  
8 ounces lemonade

\* Serving sizes vary between 1/2cup -1 1/4cups. Check the product's nutrition label.

\*\* Fat content changes serving counts for fats and oils: For example, 1 tablespoon of regular salad dressing equals 1 serving; 1 tablespoon of a lowfat dressing equals 1/2serving; 1 tablespoon of a fat free dressing equals 0 servings.

## Tips On How To Make Healthier Meals

**Begin by choosing foods low in saturated fat, low in sodium and low in calories:**

Try fat free (skim) milk or lowfat (1%) milk

Only buy cheeses marked "lowfat" or "fat free" on the package

Choose to eat fruits and vegetables without butter or sauce

Serve rice, beans, cereals, pasta, whole grains (e.g., couscous, barley, bulgar, etc.)

Choose lean cuts of meat, fish, and skinless turkey and chicken

When available, buy low- or reduced-sodium or no-salt-added versions of foods

**Use these recipe substitutions:**

Use two egg whites for each whole egg and margarine or oil instead of butter

Use light mayonnaise instead of the regular variety

Use nonfat yogurt instead of sour cream

Use lowfat cheese instead of regular cheese

Use 1 percent or skim milk instead of whole milk

Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat rather than canned or processed types

### Try these meal tips:

Make a meatloaf with lean ground turkey

Make tacos with skinless chicken breast

Cool soups and gravies and skim off fat before reheating them

Try adding salsa on a baked potato instead of butter

Make a spicy baked fish — season with green pepper, onion, garlic, oregano, lemon, or cilantro

Eat fruit for dessert, instead of pie or cake

## Know How Many Calories You Should Eat

To avoid gaining weight over time, you should aim to burn up as many calories through basic metabolic function and physical activity as you take in. To know whether you're on track, you need to be able to estimate how many calories you need based on your age, gender and level of physical activity.

The calorie ranges shown in this table allow for the needs of people of different ages within an age group. Adults need fewer calories at older ages. For example, an active 31-year-old man needs about 3,000 daily calories, but an active 50-year-old man needs only about 2,800 calories.

		<b>Activity Level and Estimated Calories Burned</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Sedentary<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Moderately Active<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Active<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>19–30</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000-2,200</b>	<b>2,400</b>
	<b>31–50</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,200</b>
	<b>51+</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,000-2,200</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>19–30</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>2,600-2,800</b>	<b>3,000</b>
	<b>31–50</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>2,400-2,600</b>	<b>2,800-3,000</b>
	<b>51+</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,200-2,400</b>	<b>2,400-2,800</b>

<sup>1</sup> Sedentary means you have a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

<sup>2</sup> Moderately active means you have a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

<sup>3</sup> Active means you have a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

## **Eat a Diet Rich in Vegetables and Fruits**

Vegetables and fruits are an important part of a healthy diet.

To get the most benefit, keep these recommendations in mind:

- Replace high-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables.
- Eat especially the deeply colored vegetables and fruits, such as spinach, carrots, peaches and berries. They tend to be higher in vitamins and minerals than others, such as potatoes and corn.
- Eat whole vegetables (fresh, frozen or canned) and fruits instead of drinking juices.
- Choose frozen and canned vegetables and fruits in water without added sugar, saturated and trans fat, or salt when fresh foods are not available to you.
- Prepare vegetables and fruits without added saturated and trans fat, sugar, and salt.

## **Choose Whole-Grain, High-Fiber Foods**

The fiber found in unrefined whole-grain foods can help lower your blood cholesterol, which is important in preventing heart disease and stroke.

- Choose foods such as whole wheat, oats and oatmeal, rye, barley and corn. Also include popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur (cracked wheat), millet, quinoa and sorghum.

- Choose breads and other foods that list whole grains as the first item in the ingredient list.
- Aim for about 25 grams of fiber each day.

## **The Benefits of Eating Fish**

Fish, especially oily fish, is rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids. Research has established a link between eating fish and a lowered risk of death from coronary heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends that you eat at least two servings of fish each week. (One serving equals about 3 ounces cooked, or a serving about the size of a checkbook).

- Examples of fish relatively high in omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, trout and herring.
- Grill, bake or poach fish. Limit commercially fried fish and don't add cream sauces.
- Prepare fish without added saturated and trans fat.

## **Eat Less of the Nutrient-Poor Foods**

It's not a good idea to use your daily allotment of calories on a few high-calorie foods and beverages that don't provide the nutrients your body needs. Follow these recommendations as you develop an overall healthy eating plan.

### **Limit how much saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol you**

**eat.** These fats are usually found in meat and dairy foods and products that

are commercially baked and fried. Cutting back on these foods can reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease by lowering "bad" LDL cholesterol in your blood.

**Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat.**

- Cuts of red meat and pork labeled 'loin' and 'round' usually have the least amount of fat.
- Remove all visible fat from meat and poultry before cooking.
- Remove skin from poultry before eating.
- Choose white meat most often when eating poultry.
- Grill, bake or broil meats and poultry.
- Cut back on processed meats that are high in saturated fat and sodium.

**Select fat-free, 1 percent fat, and low-fat dairy products.**

- Minimize your intake of whole-fat dairy products such as butter and whole milk or full-fat dairy products (yogurt, cheeses).
- If you drink whole or 2 percent milk, or use full-fat dairy products, gradually switch to fat-free, low-fat or reduced-fat dairy products.

**Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.**

- Use liquid vegetable oils and soft margarines in place of hard margarine or shortening.
- Limit cakes, cookies, crackers, pastries, pies, muffins, doughnuts and French fries made with partially hydrogenated or saturated fats.

### **Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol.**

- Try to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
- Some commonly eaten cholesterol-containing foods include eggs (about 200 mg per yolk), shellfish (50 to 100 mg per ½ cup), “organ” meats such as liver (375 mg per 3 oz), and whole milk (30 mg per cup).

**Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.** Many snack foods and beverages have added sugar. Cut back on added sugars to lower your total calorie intake. These foods tend to be low in vitamins and minerals and the calories add up quickly. Also, drinking calorie-containing beverages may not make you feel full. This could tempt you to eat and drink more than you need and gain weight.

- Examples of added sugars are sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, dextrose, corn syrups, high-fructose corn syrup, concentrated fruit juice and honey.
- Read the ingredient list. Choose items that don’t have added sugars in their first four listed ingredients.

**Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt.** Foods low in salt lower your risk for high blood pressure and may help you control it.

- Compare the sodium content of similar products (for example, different brands of tomato sauce) and choose the products with less sodium.
- Choose frozen foods, soups, cereals, baked goods and other processed foods that are labeled “reduced-sodium.”
- Limit high-sodium condiments and foods such as soy sauce, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, flavored seasoning salts, pickles and olives.
- Replace salt with herbs and spices or some of the salt-free seasoning mixes. Use lemon juice, citrus zest or hot chiles to add flavor.
- Try rinsing certain foods, such as canned tuna and salmon, feta cheese and capers, to remove some of the sodium.
- Aim to eat less than 2,300 mg of salt per day. Some people — African Americans, middle-aged and older adults, and people with high blood pressure — need less than 1,500 mg per day.

## **Use the Same Principles When You Eat Out**

Many of us eat out for most of our meals. Here’s the danger: Many types of “away from home” meals, including prepared meals you buy at the grocery store, are high in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, added sugars and sodium. And portion sizes have increased dramatically over the last several years, which means more calories to eat.

- To keep portions smaller, split an entrée with your dining partner or take half home when dining alone.

- Ask for sauces and dressing on the side to control the fats, sodium and calories you eat.
- When ordering, choose foods that have been grilled, baked, steamed or poached instead of fried, sautéed, smothered or au gratin.
- Try ordering two or three appetizers instead of a full meal and add a salad (watch the dressing) or soup.
- If you choose a dessert, split it with your dining partners or ask for fresh fruit. Another alternative is a fat-free cappuccino or espresso beverage instead.