



DYNAMIC AGING

DASH to Health During National Nutrition Month

Genetics, excess weight, physical inactivity and dietary factors all contribute to your increased risk for high blood pressure, or hypertension. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke affecting more than 65 million Americans ages six and over. During National Nutrition Month, consider adopting a new healthful eating plan to lower your risk.

Well established changes to your eating plan that lower blood pressure are reducing salt intake, losing weight and only drinking alcohol in moderation. The DASH diet, or Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, established by the National Institutes of Health, has been shown to help reduce blood pressure in people with normal and elevated levels, in part by increasing potassium and calcium levels and lowering sodium.

The DASH diet is an eating plan that adds foods to your diet rather than taking them away. The plan calls for eating 8 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables, three servings of low fat or fat free dairy foods, lean meat, poultry and fish, and increased intake of plant proteins every day. And while it was designed for people with hypertension, DASH is an eating plan the whole family can enjoy.

To include more fruit daily, have fruits as snacks:

- Cut up fresh fruit yourself, or buy pre cut packages of fruit pieces like pineapples or melons. Or, try whole fresh berries or grapes.
- Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, 1/4cup is equivalent to 1/2cup of other fruits.
- Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or bag. Some fruits that are available dried include apricots, apples, pineapple, bananas, cherries, figs, dates, cranberries, blueberries, prunes (dried plums), and raisins (dried grapes).
- As a snack, spread peanut butter on apple slices or top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit.
- Frozen juice bars (100% juice) make healthy alternatives to high fat snacks.

To include more vegetables, and for the best nutritional value:

- Select vegetables with more potassium, such as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, lima beans, winter squash, spinach, lentils, kidney beans, and split peas.
- Prepare more foods from fresh ingredients to lower sodium intake. Most sodium in the food supply comes from packaged or processed foods.

- Buy canned vegetables labeled "no salt added." If you want to add a little salt it will likely be less than the amount in the regular canned product.
- Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a vegetable stir fry or soup. Then add other foods to complement it.
- Try a main dish salad for lunch. Go light on the salad dressing.
- Include a green salad with your dinner every night.
- Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf, casseroles, quick breads, and muffins.
- Include chopped vegetables in pasta sauce or lasagna.
- Order a veggie pizza with toppings like mushrooms, green peppers, and onions, and ask for extra veggies.
- Use pureed, cooked vegetables such as potatoes to thicken stews, soups and gravies. These add flavor, nutrients, and texture.
- Grill vegetable kabobs as part of a barbecue meal. Try tomatoes, mushrooms, green peppers, and onions.