



High blood pressure, or hypertension, affects nearly one in three American adults, yet it is often overlooked or unrecognized. If not adequately treated, high blood pressure can contribute to heart and kidney disease, stroke, and blindness. The good news is that changes in your food and activity habits can reduce your high blood pressure!

## BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS

**Normal** – less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic (120/80)

**Prehypertension** – 120-139 systolic or 80-89 diastolic

**Hypertension** – 140 or higher systolic or 90 or higher diastolic

## A HEALTHY EATING PLAN: D.A.S.H. (DIETARY APPROACH TO STOP HYPERTENSION)

Build your meals and snacks around these foods:

- **Fruits** – 4-5 servings a day, 2-3 servings if you have diabetes
- **Vegetables** – 3-6 servings a day
- **Fat-free or low fat milk and milk products** – 2-3 servings a day
- **Whole grain breads and cereals** – 6-11 servings a day
- **Lean meats, poultry, and fish** – 3-6 ounces a day
- **Nuts, seeds, legumes, and beans** – 3 times a week

(Note: the number of servings a day varies according to one's caloric needs. Persons who require 1200-1600 calories a day should eat the lower number of servings. Those who need more calories should eat the higher number of servings a day.)

Limit or choose less of these foods:

- **Fats** - butter, margarines, salad dressings, mayo, and all fried foods, as well as higher fat snack foods, pastries, muffins, donuts, cookies, and desserts.
- **Salt, Sodium** - Keep your total sodium to less than 2300 mg. a day, with an eventual goal of 1500 or less. For information on tips to reduce salt and sodium, foods that are high in sodium, low sodium food choices, and food labels, please ask for the handout “Sodium Intake,” created by The Portland Clinic’s Nutrition Department.

## **MAINTAIN HEALTHY WEIGHT**

If you need to lose weight, choose to change your lifestyle rather than turning to popular diets and diet supplements, that often have short-term results:

- Become more active (see next page).
- Choose smaller portion sizes, use a smaller plate.
- Limit eating out, especially fast food restaurants. Share your order with a friend or take 1/2 of the meal home.
- Eat breakfast or a small breakfast plus a mid-morning snack.
- Avoid large evening meals and frequent, high calorie snacks.
- Drink beverages that have 0 -10 calories a serving.
- Make a plan to keep from eating due to stress, depression, or boredom.
- Keep a food journal to track what, when, why, and how much you eat. With this information, you can plan to make positive changes in your eating habits.

## **INCREASE YOUR ACTIVITY**

Make regular exercise a part of your daily life. Aim for 150 minutes a week of brisk walking, biking, or cardio exercise equipment. For example, walk 30 minutes for 5 days a week. Look for ways to increase your activity in everyday life, such as walking to the store or parking farther away from work. Tip: With a pedometer, gradually increase your total walking to 10,000 steps a day.

## **ALCOHOL IN MODERATION**

If you do drink alcohol, think moderation: two drinks or less a day for men, one drink or less a day for women. One drink equals a 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine, or 1 oz. liquor.

## **STOP SMOKING**

Your risk of heart disease more than doubles if you smoke. If you do smoke, choose a “stop date” as soon as possible. See your physician for information and assistance.

## **TAKE CARE OF STRESS**

An anxious and stress-filled life can take its toll on health, including raising your blood pressure. Look for ways to decrease stress factors in your life. Is there any way you can change the situation or the way you think about it? Exercise, journaling, and talking with a mental health professional or trusted family/friend can be helpful to lessening the stress in your life.

### Resources

- National Heart Lung and Blood Association:  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/)  
Search under DASH Diet.
- Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)  
Search under DASH Diet.