



# DASH DIET

A Practical Guide



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# Step-by-Step Guide to **STARTING THE DASH DIET**



STEP	ACTION	PURPOSE / BENEFIT
<b>1. Consult Your Doctor</b>	Discuss how the DASH plan fits with your medications and health conditions.	Ensures safety and personalizes your nutrition plan.
<b>2. Learn the Basics</b>	Review DASH serving sizes, sodium goals, and food groups.	Builds understanding and confidence before starting.
<b>3. Evaluate Current Habits</b>	Track your meals for a few days to identify areas for improvement.	Highlights gaps in fruit, vegetable, or whole-grain intake.
<b>4. Make Gradual Swaps</b>	Replace high-sodium and processed foods with fresh, whole options.	Reduces sodium and increases nutrient density.
<b>5. Set Small Goals</b>	Focus on one or two realistic changes each week.	Prevents overwhelm and encourages consistency.
<b>6. Keep a Food Diary</b>	Log what and when you eat, and note emotional triggers.	Builds awareness and promotes mindful eating.
<b>7. Find Foods You Enjoy</b>	Choose healthy foods from the Dash food list you genuinely like.	Increases satisfaction and long-term adherence.
<b>8. Modify Favorite Recipes</b>	Add veggies, reduce salt, use herbs and spices.	Keeps familiar meals while improving heart health.
<b>9. Try New Recipes and Ingredients</b>	Experiment with whole grains, beans, and herbs.	Adds variety and prevents boredom.
<b>10. Accept Imperfection</b>	Don't give up if you slip; refocus and continue.	Encourages resilience and realistic expectations.
<b>11. Celebrate Wins</b>	Acknowledge progress like improved energy or lower BP.	Reinforces motivation and commitment.

# DASH EATING PLAN

## What Foods Can I Eat on the DASH Diet?

SERVINGS	SERVING SIZE	EXAMPLES
 <p><b>VEGETABLES</b> 4-5 servings per day</p>	<p>1 cup raw leafy greens 1/2 cup chopped raw or cooked vegetables 1/2 cup vegetable juice</p>	<p>Lettuce, kale, spinach, broccoli, carrots, green beans, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, asparagus, green peppers, low sodium tomato juice, collards, green peas, lima beans, potatoes</p>
 <p><b>FRUITS</b> 4-5 servings per day</p>	<p>1 medium fruit 1/2 cup cut fresh, frozen or canned fruit 1/4 cup dried fruit 1/2 cup 100% fruit juice</p>	<p>Apples, bananas, berries, oranges, pears, pineapple, peaches, grapes, strawberries, melons, mangoes, grapefruit, tangerines, low-sugar juice fruit, no sugar added dried fruit (raisins, apricots, dates, figs)</p>
 <p><b>WHOLE GRAINS</b> 6-8 servings per day</p>	<p>1 slice of bread 1/2 - 1 cup dry cereal 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta or grains</p>	<p>Oatmeal, grits, brown rice, quinoa, whole grain cereal, whole, wheat bread, whole wheat rolls, whole wheat pasta, pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, unsalted pretzels or popcorn</p>
 <p><b>LOW-FAT DAIRY</b> 2-3 servings per day</p>	<p>1 cup milk or yogurt 1 1/2 ounce cheese</p>	<p>milk (fat free, low fat), buttermilk, cheese (low fat or fat free), yogurt or frozen yogurt (fat free or low fat), fortified soy milk, lactose free products</p>
 <p><b>LEAN PROTEINS</b> 5-6 servings per day</p>	<p>1 ounce cooked meat, poultry or fish 1 egg = 1 ounce serving</p>	<p>Chicken or turkey without skin; salmon, tuna, trout; lean cuts of beef, pork, and lamb. Bake, broil or poach (avoid fried food)</p>
 <p><b>HEALTHY FATS</b> 2-3 servings</p>	<p>1 teaspoon soft margarine 1 teaspoon vegetable oil</p>	<p>Soft margarine, vegetable oils, canola oil, corn oil, olive oil, sunflower oil, light salad dressing, low fat mayonnaise</p>
 <p><b>BEANS &amp; SEEDS</b> 4 servings per week</p>	<p>1/3 cup nuts 2 tablespoons seeds 1/2 cup cooked beans 2 tablespoons peanut butter</p>	<p>Almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanuts, mixed nuts, hazelnuts, peanut butter, kidney beans, pinto beans, lentils, split peas</p>
 <p><b>DESSERTS &amp; SWEETS</b> 4 or less servings per week</p>	<p>1 tablespoon jelly 1/2 cup sorbet 1 small cookie</p>	<p>Jams, jellies, fruit punch, hard candy, maple syrup, sorbet, sugar, fruit flavored gelatin</p>

# Foods to Limit on the DASH Diet

FOOD CATEGORY	REASON	EXAMPLES
	<b>HIGH-SODIUM FOODS</b> Contribute to high blood pressure	Canned soups, processed meats, sauces
	<b>SWEETS AND ADDED SUGARS</b> Can raise triglycerides and blood sugar	Cakes, candies, sodas
	<b>REFINED GRAINS</b> Lack fiber and nutrients	White bread, regular pasta
	<b>RED MEAT</b> High in saturated fat	Beef, lamb, pork
	<b>FULL-FAT DAIRY</b> Increases cholesterol levels	Whole milk, cream, butter

## Foods to Avoid on the DASH Diet

EXAMPLES	WHY AVOID THEM	FOOD CATEGORY
Bacon, sausage, deli meats	Extremely high in sodium and preservatives	<b>PROCESSED MEATS</b>
Fried chicken, fries, chips	High in unhealthy fats	<b>FRIED FOODS</b>
Soda, energy drinks, sweet tea	Spikes blood sugar and adds empty calories	<b>SUGARY DRINKS</b>
Salted snacks: nuts, pretzels, flavored crackers	Raise blood pressure quickly	<b>HIGH-SODIUM SNACKS</b>
Packaged pastries, margarine, processed snacks	Increase risk of heart disease	<b>TRANS FATS</b>



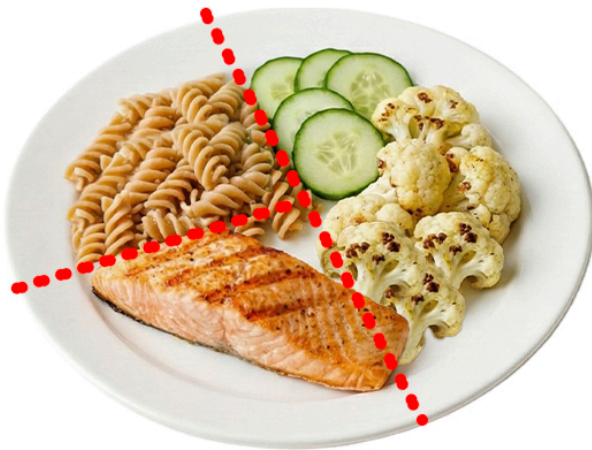
# DASH Daily Menu Example

SERVING	FOODS
<b>BREAKFAST</b>	
Grains 2	2 slices whole grain bread
Fruit 1	1 medium banana
Protein 2	2 broiled eggs
<b>MORNING SNACK</b>	
Dairy 1	1 cup yogurt
FRUIT 1	1 medium apple
<b>LUNCH</b>	
Grains 2	1 cup cooked brown rice
Vegetables 1	1 cup raw leafy greens
Vegetables 2	1 cup chopped cooked or raw vegetables
Protein 2	2 ounces fish
Oil/Fat 1	2 tbsp salad dressing
Fruit 1	1/2 cup fruit juice
<b>AFTERNOON SNACK</b>	
Fruit 1	1/4 cup dried fruit (unsweetened)
Nuts, Seeds, Legumes 1	1/3 cup unsalted nuts
Dairy 1	1 1/2 oz cheese
<b>DINNER</b>	
Grains 2	1 cup pasta
Oil/Fat 1	1 tsp soft margarine
Protein 2	2 ounces poultry
Vegetables 1	1 cup low-sodium vegetable juice



**CREATE YOUR OWN MEAL > FREE DASH DIET MEAL PLANNER**  
<https://onemed.clinic/free-dash-diet-meal-plan/>

- 1/4 with lean meat, poultry, fish or beans.
- 1/4 with a whole grain.
- 1/2 of your plate with vegetables.
- Add fruit for a sweet treat.
- Have a salad and yogurt on the side.



## DASH Diet Tips

### WHERE SHOULD YOU BEGIN?

1. Start by writing down everything you eat in a full day.
2. Then compare those meals with the DASH eating plan.
3. You can also use online tools to track your food and activity. Try [upertracker.usda.gov](http://upertracker.usda.gov).

- Choose fruit for simple grab and go snacks. Pick options that are ready to eat like apples, bananas, or canned fruit packed in juice.
- Try casseroles, pasta dishes, and stir-fry meals. These make it easy to use less meat and include more vegetables, beans, and whole grains.
- Add an extra serving of vegetables to both lunch and dinner.
- Wash and chop fresh vegetables ahead of time and keep them in a clear container in the fridge. This makes them quick to use when you need them.
- Keep frozen vegetables on hand to add to stir-fry meals, casseroles, soups, and sauces.
- Choose whole grain products whenever possible. They help you feel full and add more fiber to your diet.
- Include low fat milk with meals. Swap sweet drinks for low fat milk, and add it to cooked cereals or homemade soups.
- Gradually reduce your portion sizes of meat, poultry, or fish. Fill more of your plate with vegetables instead.
- Snack on low fat yogurt or a small piece of low fat cheese.
- Take the saltshaker off the table. Avoid adding salt while cooking, or at least cut the amount in half.

# Where is the salt coming from?

Most of the salt in our diets comes from processed, packaged, and restaurant foods, not from the saltshaker on the table. Always check the Nutrition Facts label so you can compare sodium levels and choose lower salt options.



**77%**

is from packaged and restaurant

**12%**

is naturally occurring in foods

**11%**

is from salt added to food while cooking and eating

## Nutrition Facts

3 servings per container  
**Serving size 3 pretzels (28g)**

	Per serving		Per container
<b>Calories</b>	<b>110</b>		<b>330</b>
	% DV*		% DV*
<b>Total Fat</b>	0.5g <b>1%</b>	1.5g	<b>3%</b>
Saturated Fat	0g <b>0%</b>	0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat	0g	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg <b>0%</b>	0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b>	400mg <b>17%</b>	1200mg	<b>52%</b>
<b>Total Carb.</b>	23g <b>8%</b>	69g	<b>24%</b>
Dietary Fiber	2g <b>7%</b>	6g	<b>21%</b>
Total Sugars	<1g	3g	
Incl. Added Sugars	0g <b>0%</b>	0g	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b>	3g	9g	
Vitamin D	0mcg 0%	0mcg	0%
Calcium	10mg 0%	30mg	2%
Iron	1.2mg 6%	3.6mg	18%
Potassium	90mg 0%	270mg	5%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

The salt in food is listed as "Sodium" on the Nutrition Facts label. Most adults should stay under 2,300 mg of sodium a day, which is roughly one teaspoon of table salt. If you have high blood pressure, aim for no more than 1,500 mg per day.

On food labels, a % Daily Value over 20 percent is considered high, so try to choose items with 5 percent or less per serving.

## What is a serving size?

Compare the portions you eat with the serving sizes in the DASH eating plan and sample menu. When you cannot weigh or measure your food, use familiar everyday objects to help you estimate how much you are actually eating.



Golf ball  
= 1 oz or 2 tbsp



9 volt battery  
= 1 oz cheese



Deck of cards  
= 3 oz meat



Baseball  
= 1 cup