

The DASH Diet Can Help Lower High Blood Pressure.

1 in 4 Americans has high blood pressure – a major risk factor for heart disease and other chronic illnesses. The DASH diet can help!

Over the past decade, scientists have been researching and measuring the effects of certain nutrients and dietary factors in reducing blood pressure. The first DASH study (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) published in 1997 began as an effort for scientists to discover what effects certain dietary practices would have in reducing blood pressure.

Researchers already knew that calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium played some role in blood pressure control, but previous studies generally failed to show big changes in blood pressure with supplementation of *individual nutrients*, with the exception of potassium. As a result, the DASH study was conducted to measure the effects of the *overall diet* – or combination of nutrients – on blood pressure.

The results showed that the DASH combination diet was able to significantly lower blood pressure and therefore today plays an important role in preventing and controlling high blood pressure.

The DASH diet reduces overall fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet while increasing vegetables and fruits, in addition to low-fat or nonfat dairy foods to keep calcium and potassium levels high. Recently, DASH researchers have released a revised DASH-Sodium diet, based on findings that certain individuals can benefit from controlling their sodium intake.

The following table represents the components of the DASH combination diet, shown to reduce the blood pressure in individuals with high-normal and high blood pressure. The aim of the diet is to include increased servings of fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products, which are rich sources of potassium, magnesium, calcium and fiber.

Food Group	DASH Diet Daily Servings
Grains and grain products	7-8
Vegetables	4-5
Fruits	4-5
Low-fat or nonfat dairy foods	2-3
Meats, poultry and fish	≤2
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	4-5 (per week)
Sodium*	≤1,500 milligrams

* DASH-Sodium diet – (revised 2001).

References:

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