



# Pathway to a heart-healthy diet

## Keep your blood pressure in check by watching your sodium

In general, Americans have too much salt in their diets. Sodium occurs naturally in some foods. And it's often added to processed and pre-packaged foods. A lot of us also add salt as we cook, then use more at the table.

Your body needs sodium for normal muscle and nerve functions. But too much of it can raise your blood pressure. So it's good to know how much you're eating, even if you don't have high blood pressure now.

## Learn how the DASH plan can help you feel your best

DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is a heart-healthy approach to eating. It doesn't require any special food, is easy to follow and has many benefits.

The plan focuses on foods that can naturally help lower your blood pressure. And it includes foods that are low in saturated fat, sodium, sugar and cholesterol.

Keep in mind — the plan isn't just all about limits — it's about eating good, heart-healthy food for life.

## Sodium vs. salt: what's the difference?

Sodium is a mineral found in many processed and pre-packaged foods.

Salt is what we add to our food. Most table salts are made from sodium chloride.

# The DASH plan includes plenty of tasty food options



- Fruits and veggies
- Beans, seeds and nuts
- Whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy products
- Fish, poultry and other lean protein, and more

## 7 quick changes you can make now



Try these easy ways to boost your diet and help you feel your best. Even small changes can make a big impact on your health.

1	Add a serving of veggies or fruit at lunch and dinner. For example, try adding veggie toppings to a ready-made pizza.
2	Treat meat as one part of the meal, instead of the focus. Try having two or more meatless meals a week.
3	Drink fat-free milk. A glass has only 80 calories and no fat. It's packed with nutrients that can help lower blood pressure.
4	Choose whole grain foods, including whole-grain cereals.
5	Add garbanzo beans (chickpeas) to a salad, or make split pea or black bean soup.
6	Take fruit to work or school as a snack.
7	Use half the butter or margarine you do now.



You can learn more at  
[NHLBI.NIH.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan)

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