



healthy eating,
healthy blood pressure
An everyday guide

high blood pressure

SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Simple diet and lifestyle changes can be powerful tools in helping lower high blood pressure.

For some people, it may even bring their blood pressure back to normal or reduce the amount of medication they need.

What is high blood pressure?

The role of our heart is to pump blood throughout our body. “Blood pressure” is the force that circulating blood creates within the walls of our blood vessels. It is similar to the pressure created by water inside a garden hose when the water is on.

High blood pressure, also known as *hypertension*, is a medical condition that exists when the force (or pressure) of the blood against the blood vessel walls is too strong.

High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard. Over time, the extra force can cause arteries to become scarred and less elastic. While these changes will happen gradually

with age, they occur more quickly in people with elevated blood pressure. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, congestive heart failure and kidney failure. In fact, high blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major risk factor for heart disease.

You can have hypertension for years with no symptoms. According to the *Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada*, approximately one fifth of Canadians suffers from high blood pressure and almost half of them don't know it.



One fifth of Canadians suffers from high blood pressure.

What causes high blood pressure?

Many factors can contribute to the development of high blood pressure. Often it isn't just one

thing, but a combination. Some of the factors are out of our control.

Risk of high blood pressure increases as we get older and is most common among people over 40 years old. Canadians of African descent are also more likely to develop hypertension than others, and they do so at a younger age. Smoking, genetics and certain conditions such as obesity, diabetes or kidney disease may also increase risk.

Take control

Taking any of the steps below can help improve your blood pressure. The more you do, the healthier your blood pressure will be.

- ▶ If you smoke, get help to quit
- ▶ Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- ▶ Reduce sodium (salt) intake
- ▶ Limit alcohol to 1-2 standard drinks a day, or less
- ▶ Be physically active 30-60 minutes most days
- ▶ Eat a healthy diet

DASH to healthy eating

Good news! A simple pattern of healthy eating, known as the DASH diet, has been shown to help effectively lower elevated blood pressure, as well as reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure.

Based on extensive research conducted by a group of renowned health institutions, DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) involves no complicated instructions or special foods.

To meet DASH guidelines, you simply follow *Canada's Food Guide* and aim for 8 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit, and 3 servings of milk products. A sample of the Guide can be found in the Dash Tracker insert overleaf.

Some people experience additional benefits by reducing the sodium (salt) in their diet as well.

The DASH diet study has shown that a healthy pattern of eating that includes 3 servings of milk products a day plus 8 to 10 servings of fruit and vegetables reduces blood pressure twice as much as a diet high only in vegetables and fruit.

INTERESTING FACT

The DASH pattern of eating is very similar to the food choices in *Canada's Food Guide*, with greater emphasis placed on vegetables, fruit and milk products.



how does the DASH diet work?

MILK AND ALTERNATIVES

DASH recommends 3 servings of milk products every day.

Each example is one serving:



VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

DASH recommends 8-10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day.

Each example is one serving:



Key foods associated with healthy blood pressure

Studies have revealed that vegetables, fruit and milk products, especially milk and yogurt, help maintain a healthy blood pressure. These nutritious foods provide calcium, magnesium and potassium, a combination of nutrients that have long been associated with a reduced risk of high blood pressure. However, it's probably the synergy between these crucial nutrients and other, as yet unidentified, compounds in vegetables, fruit and milk products that makes these foods so effective.

Milk products also contain bio-active peptides, a special type of protein that seems to have a beneficial effect on blood pressure. They are similar to the active ingredients found in much stronger doses in blood-pressure-lowering medications.

Are supplements as effective as food?

Individual nutrients consumed in the form of supplements may not have the same blood pressure lowering effect as foods. You need to eat the foods to get the full benefits. Why? Food has many other components beyond the nutrients mentioned previously. These provide further benefits that work in ways not yet fully understood.

The vast majority of Canadians don't eat enough servings of vegetables, fruit and milk products every day to meet the recommendations of the DASH Diet.

salt, weight and labels

Reduce your sodium intake

Reducing sodium consumption can be an important part of achieving and maintaining healthy blood pressure. Health Canada has set the upper limit of sodium intake to 2,300 mg a day. The current consumption of Canadians is about 3,400 mg—most of us would do better having less.

Start slowly by cutting a little salt from your diet every day. Note that processed food such as canned and prepared foods, including those from restaurants and fast food establishments, are the major source of sodium in the Canadian diet, not the salt we add at the table.

Tips to help reduce your sodium intake:

At home:

- ▶ Prepare meals with fresh ingredients whenever possible
- ▶ Reduce salt in cooking by using herbs and spices instead
- ▶ For a flavour hit, squeeze fresh lemon juice on food instead of salting it

- ▶ Limit processed meats, pickled and smoked foods
- ▶ Read labels and choose lower sodium foods when available

In restaurants:

- ▶ Ask for your sauces and salad dressings on the side—they usually contain a lot of sodium
- ▶ Ask for lower sodium choices in restaurants

The importance of losing weight

If you are overweight (or above your healthy weight), even a small weight reduction, as little as 4.5 kg (10 lbs), can have a significant effect on your blood pressure.

Can you follow the DASH pattern of eating to lose weight? Certainly. In fact, research shows that when you watch your portion sizes, following DASH can be very effective.

To calculate your healthy weight and to learn whether your waist size increases your risk of high blood pressure, drop by yourhealthyweight.ca

Read labels, learn lots

Nutrition Facts tables and ingredient lists provide lots of helpful information and are a great tool for anyone trying to change the way they eat. Read them and compare what's in different foods before you buy.

For example: Watching your portions? Check what the serving size is—you may be routinely eating more than you think. Buying foods that show higher protein and/or fibre content will help keep you satisfied and sustain your energy levels longer. Also, use the sodium content listed on the label to compare similar foods and choose your best option.



eating more of the good stuff

INTERESTING FACT

Consuming the recommended daily servings of milk products is associated with having lower levels of body fat, especially around the middle where it most increases your risk of high blood pressure.



Feel good! Committing yourself to making positive changes in your diet will have lifelong benefits to your health and well-being.

EXPLORE THE VARIETY OF MILK PRODUCTS

A simple way to increase your consumption of milk products is to have yogurt for an afternoon snack or a cold glass of milk at night.

Top up

See every meal as an opportunity to meet your DASH milk product guidelines. Here are some ideas:

- ▶ Increase the milk on your morning cereal to a whole serving and make sure you finish it all
- ▶ Make dips and dressings with yogurt
- ▶ Make your soups milk-based
- ▶ Choose yogurt or milk-based puddings for dessert

Snack wise

Snacking on milk products can be an important pro-DASH eating strategy. Also milk, yogurt and cheese contain protein which makes them more satisfying than foods like chips or cookies, not to mention more nutritious.

DASH your drinks

Rethinking what you drink opens up lots of opportunities to add more DASH to your diet.

- ▶ Did you know that chocolate milk has the same nutrients as white milk and no more sugar than a glass of unsweetened apple juice?
- ▶ Make your morning coffee a latte or have a milky chai and make your winter drink hot chocolate made with milk.
- ▶ Blending up a smoothie with yogurt, fruit and a little milk gives you servings of both DASH-recommended food groups and lots of satisfying taste.

GET COLOURFUL WITH VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Start rethinking the focus of your meals. Instead of planning your plate around your choice of meat, spend equal time thinking about creating vegetable dishes you'll like.

- ▶ Enjoy more salads. Buy ready-washed greens to save on preparation. Munch on raw vegetables swiped in a yogurt-based dip.
- ▶ Layer your sandwiches with lots of dark green lettuce, onions, slices of tomatoes, and bell pepper.
- ▶ Make your own spaghetti and lasagna sauces with lots of vegetables or add them to sodium-reduced ready-to-serve versions.
- ▶ Commercial pizzas can be very high in salt. It's easy to make your own by piling sliced tomatoes, veggies and grated cheese on whole grain tortillas or English muffins, then baking them.

- ▶ Fresh, in a sauce, compote or dried, fruit is delicious and super convenient. Add berries to your cereal, snack on an apple at work. Have fresh fruit salad for dessert.
- ▶ Add lots of veggies to your soups.

Celebrate success

Don't forget to use the tracker. You'll find it an invaluable tool. Every time you meet a goal, no matter how modest, congratulate yourself and celebrate your success. Share the news with friends and family and reward yourself. Remember that you want your love of healthy choices to last a lifetime.

With the DASH approach, healthy eating is a goal within everyone's reach.



the everyday healthy eating

DASH tracker

Congratulations! Committing yourself to making changes in your diet and lifestyle will have lifelong benefits to your health and well-being.

Take it slow

The way you eat now didn't happen overnight, so don't try to make a lot of major changes to your diet (or your behaviours) all at once. People who make small changes over a longer period are much more likely to succeed. And when you slip up, don't feel bad—just get back on track.

Using the tracker

Familiarize yourself with the tracker and fill it out every day. Make taking your blood pressure a priority and be sure to record it. Try to do it when you are feeling relaxed.

Food-wise, using the tracker keeps you aware of what you are actually consuming. It allows you to set a goal, analyze your behaviour and motivate change. In other words, using it will help you succeed!

First steps

The key to making healthy changes is to know your starting point. For the first couple of weeks, use the tracker to get a handle on your current eating habits. Chances are you really don't know how many servings of vegetables, fruit and milk products you are eating now.

With an accurate idea of your present eating pattern, you'll be in a good position to think about what needs to change.

Tack the Healthy Eating DASH Tracker to your fridge and fill it out once a day. Doing it before dinner gives you a chance to top up on missing foods at dinner or with an evening snack.

everyday healthy eating

DASH tracker

Week _____

Visit www.dairygoodness.ca/hypertension to make extra copies of these pages.

Check off each serving you eat. Feel good about every one!

	VEGETABLES AND FRUIT	MILK PRODUCTS	MY BLOOD PRESSURE
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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DASH goal is 8-10 servings of VEGETABLES AND FRUIT A DAY	DASH goal is 3 servings of MILK PRODUCTS A DAY
THIS WEEK, MY GOAL IS _____ DAILY SERVING(S).	THIS WEEK, MY GOAL IS _____ DAILY SERVING(S).
I'm going to achieve it by _____	I'm going to achieve it by _____
_____	_____

How did I do this week and what can I do differently next week to help meet my goals?

CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE

	VEGETABLES AND FRUIT	MILK AND ALTERNATIVES	GRAIN PRODUCTS	MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES
Canada's Food Guide recommended number of servings	Females (age 19-50): 7-8 Males (age 19-50): 8-10 Adults (age 51+): 7	Adults (age 19-50): 2 Adults (age 51+): 3	Females (age 19-50): 6-7 Males (age 19-50): 8 Females (age 51+): 6 Males (age 51+): 7	Females (19+): 2 Males (19+): 3
	DASH Diet Goals: 8-10 servings	DASH Diet Goals: 3 servings		
Examples of one serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ One apple ▶ ½ cup of broccoli ▶ ½ cup of carrots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 250 mL (1 cup) of milk ▶ 175 g of yogurt ▶ 50 g of cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 slice of bread ▶ ½ cup breakfast cereal, rice or pasta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 75 g meat, poultry or fish ▶ 2 eggs ▶ ¾ cup legumes

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOAL	COMMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> I REACHED MY GOALS	Congratulations! You've done amazingly well. Maintain this change and you'll derive a lifetime of benefits. You are now ready to tackle your next goal.
<input type="checkbox"/> I ALMOST REACHED MY GOALS	You are doing great! Lasting change doesn't happen overnight. Remember that positive thoughts yield positive outcomes.
<input type="checkbox"/> I DIDN'T QUITE REACH MY GOALS	Every serving you checked off is great! Keep at it. Need some inspiration? Check the brochure for tips and go to dairygoodness.ca for healthy eating information and suggestions.

everyday healthy eating

DASH tracker

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How to make changes that last

Make your changes gradually. Making a small change that lasts is better than making big changes that don't!

- ▶ Look at changing your diet as a voyage of discovery. Find healthier foods you like, and use them to bump out less healthy ones.
- ▶ Keep trying new foods, new recipes. The aim is to increase your pleasure in eating and feel healthier as you do it, not to feel deprived.
- ▶ Make only one change at a time. Don't make another one until that change has become a habit.
- ▶ If you don't achieve your goal one week, analyze why you didn't and focus on next week. Don't waste time being hard on yourself!
- ▶ If a strategy doesn't work for a couple of weeks running, try another.
- ▶ Celebrate your successes. Share them with friends and family. Be sure to reward yourself as you go. Remember that you want your love of healthy choices to last a lifetime.

*With the DASH approach, healthy eating
is a goal within everyone's reach.*



Visit **dairygoodness.ca**
*You'll find lots of information
on nutrition and dairy products,
as well as a wealth of recipes
that make eating your daily
servings of milk products
a pleasure.*

Note that the contents of this brochure and accompanying tracker are not intended to replace the advice of your physician, dietitian or other qualified health professional. Please do not make any changes to your medication, or start any new health program, without consulting them.



NUTRITION
DAIRY FARMERS OF CANADA

dairygoodness.ca

