

# Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible



» What every mid-life and older American should know



## Know your numbers

High blood pressure is called “the silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. Your numbers are often your only warning.

### Optimal blood pressure

the pressure of blood in the vessels when the heart beats: **systolic pressure**

less than  
**120/80 mmHg**

millimeters of mercury

the pressure between beats when the heart relaxes: **diastolic pressure**



**High blood pressure**  
140/90 mmHg or higher

**Prehypertension**  
between 120-39 and/or 80-89 mmHg

**Optimal blood pressure**  
less than 120/80 mmHg

## High blood pressure: A force to be reckoned with

High blood pressure (also called hypertension) increases your chances of having a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and other life-threatening conditions.

### Anyone can get it, and as you get older—and heavier—your odds increase:

- People over age 55 have a 90 percent chance of developing high blood pressure in their remaining lifetimes.
- People who are overweight or obese—or have diabetes—are more likely to develop high blood pressure.

### Treating high blood pressure can save your life:

- It can reduce your chances of having a heart attack by 27 percent, stroke by 38 percent, and heart failure by 55 percent.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled. Better yet, it can be prevented.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Enlist in this vital mission for a healthier you.



## 8 things you can do to prevent and control high blood pressure

- 1. Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain a healthy weight.** Limit portion sizes, especially of high calorie foods, and try to eat only as many calories as you burn each day—or less if you want to lose weight.
- 2. Eat heart healthfully.** Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy products and is moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- 3. Reduce salt and sodium intake.** Read food labels to choose canned, processed, and convenience foods that are lower in sodium. Limit sodium intake to 2,400 mg, or about 1 teaspoon's worth, of salt each day. Avoid fast foods that are high in salt and sodium.
- 4. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.** For men, that means a maximum of 2 drinks a day, for women, a maximum of 1.
- 5. Become more physically active.** Work up to at least 30 minutes of a moderate-level activity, such as brisk walking or bicycling, each day. If you don't have 30 minutes, try to find 2 15-minute periods or even 3 10-minute periods for physical activity.
- 6. Quit smoking.** Smoking increases your chances of developing a stroke, heart disease, peripheral arterial disease, and several forms of cancer.
- 7. Talk with your health care professional.** Ask what your blood pressure numbers are and what they mean.
- 8. Take medication as prescribed.** If you need medication, make sure you understand what it's for and how and when to take it, then take it as your doctor recommends.

## Resources to help you stay healthy



*Your Guide to Lowering High Blood Pressure* includes information on how to detect, prevent, and treat high blood pressure. Features the DASH diet, which has been shown to prevent and lower high blood pressure, and information specifically for women.  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html)

*Aim for a Healthy Weight* includes a BMI calculator, tips for shopping and preparing food, and a menu planner that is designed to guide daily food and meal choices based on 1 day's calorie allowance.  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/index.htm)

*Live Healthier, Live Longer* includes interactive materials for people with heart disease and those who want to prevent it.  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd/index.htm)

*First Gov Seniors* offers extensive health information for people over 60.  
[www.seniors.gov/health.html](http://www.seniors.gov/health.html)

### General information and publications.

NHLBI Health Information Center  
P.O. Box 30105  
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105  
Tel 301-592-8573; Fax 301-592-8563  
(Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time); TTY 240-629-3255  
[www.nhlbi.gov/health/infoctr](http://www.nhlbi.gov/health/infoctr)



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National High Blood Pressure Education Program

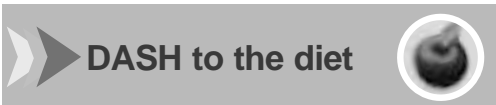
NIH Publication No. 04-5240  
March 2004

# DASH\* to the Diet:

Prevent and control high blood pressure following the DASH eating plan



What everyone should know about healthy eating



The DASH eating plan (\*Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) has been shown to prevent and reduce high blood pressure. It's rich in fruits and vegetables and lowfat dairy products, moderate in total fat, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It's even more effective if you also reduce your salt and sodium intake.

This eating plan can help you lose weight if you are overweight, which also will help lower your blood pressure.



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services

# 10 delicious ways to DASH down high blood pressure



1. Be spicy instead of salty. In cooking and at the table, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends.
2. Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked, or processed types.
3. Eat moderate portions, and when snacking, eat fruit, vegetable sticks, unbuttered and unsalted popcorn, or bread sticks.
4. Choose “convenience” foods that are lower in sodium. Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings—these often have a lot of sodium.
5. Start your day with breakfast cereals that are lower in salt and sodium.
6. Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt; cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.
7. Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned with “no-salt-added” vegetables.
8. Drink water or club soda instead of soft drinks high in sugar.
9. When eating out, move the saltshaker away—limit condiments, such as catsup, pickles, and sauces with high salt-containing ingredients.
10. Cut back on processed and fast foods that are high in salt and sodium.



## Resources for eating to prevent and control high blood pressure

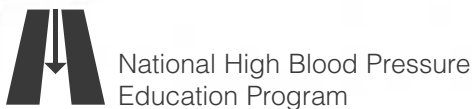


*Your Guide to Lowering High Blood Pressure* includes more information on the Dash eating plan, tips for getting started, sample meal plans, and even recipes.

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/h\\_eating/h\\_eating.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/h_eating/h_eating.htm)

*Aim for a Healthy Weight* includes a BMI calculator, tips for shopping and preparing food, and a menu planner that is designed to guide daily food and meal choices based on one day's calorie allowance.

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National High Blood Pressure  
Education Program

