

# DASH Eating Plan

A flexible and balanced eating plan that helps create a heart-healthy eating style for life



## What is the DASH Eating Plan or Diet?

DASH, stands for dietary approaches to stop hypertension, and is a flexible and balanced eating plan promoted by the U.S.-based National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to prevent and control hypertension. DASH puts an emphasis on portion size, eating a healthy variety of different foods, and making sure you get the right amount of nutrients. The DASH eating plan encourages reducing the sodium in your diet and to eat a variety of foods rich in nutrients that help lower blood pressure, such as potassium, calcium and magnesium. The protocol is based on daily calorific needs, as determined by age and physical activity levels, and is delivered via daily and weekly nutritional goals based on a series of public-health healthy eating principles (the equivalent to the UK Eatwell plan). To benefit from the DASH eating plan, it is deemed important to limit daily sodium levels to 2,300 mg, or 1,500 mg if desired, and to consume the appropriate amount of calories to maintain a healthy weight or lose weight if needed. DASH is promoted as a lifelong commitment to healthy living,

## Personalised nutrition and the DASH eating plan

The nutritional benefits of the diet are based on the following three principals: choosing foods that are low in saturated and trans fats, rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, fibre, and protein and low / lower in sodium. Four NHLBI-funded studies tested the health benefits of the DASH diet by comparing the DASH diet with the typical American diet or by comparing different variations of the DASH diet. Another NHLBI-funded study, the PREMIER clinical trial, measured the health benefits of following the DASH diet and increasing physical activity. The results of these studies showed that the DASH diet lowers blood pressure and LDL cholesterol in the blood and shaped the NHLBI's DASH eating plan recommendations, which includes following a DASH diet with reduced sodium intake. There is no equivalent in the UK.

## Optimising diet to support blood pressure

1. Eating vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
2. Including fat-free or low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and vegetable oils.
3. Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel, and palm oils.
4. Limiting sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.
5. Limiting alcohol.

1. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan>

