

How to handle high blood pressure : this information sheet gives you advice about preventing and reducing high blood pressure / Dairy Council, Doctor Patient Partnership.

Contributors

Dairy Council (Great Britain)
Doctor-Patient Partnership.

Publication/Creation

[Place of publication not identified] : Dairy Council : Doctor Patient Partnership, 2002.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bjszj3hj>

License and attribution

Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

**wellcome
collection**

Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

This information sheet gives you advice about preventing and reducing high blood pressure

What is blood pressure?

Your heart is a small but very powerful pump that pumps about 5 litres (9 pints) of blood around your body every minute. Your heart produces a force in your arteries when it pumps the blood – this is called your **blood pressure**. When your blood pressure is measured it is written down like this: **130/80mmHg** (described as 130 over 80).

When the heart relaxes and contracts it forces blood through a series of arteries, producing two types of pressure. The higher pressure is called the systolic pressure (top number). As the heart relaxes it produces the lower pressure or diastolic pressure (bottom number). In people with a healthy blood pressure, the top number can range from 90 to 150 and the bottom from 50 to 100.

Your blood pressure varies from one minute to the next and from day to day. It will increase with exercise and excitement and decrease when you are asleep.



What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure, also known as **hypertension**, happens when the blood vessels do not let the blood through as easily as usual. The force of this blood can harm the arteries and put strain on the heart.

What are the risks of hypertension?

If high blood pressure is not treated it can lead to:

- heart attack
- heart failure
- stroke
- kidney disease

Look at your lifestyle

There are some key lifestyle changes or improvements that you can make to prevent or lower high blood pressure:

Get active!

Regular exercise will not only help to lower your blood pressure, it will also help you to lose weight or keep your weight down. Exercise should be built up slowly and should not be too strenuous. Walking, gardening, cycling, dancing, housework, swimming and golf are all good forms of exercise. Aim to do up to 30 minutes of activity, five days a week.



Find your ideal weight

Try and find the weight that is ideal for your height as being overweight puts an extra strain on your heart. If you are overweight, try to get down to your ideal weight, and then stick to it. Eating a healthy diet will be a step in the right direction. It is easier to maintain weight loss if you lose weight slowly.

Limit your alcohol intake

Try and keep your alcohol intake to 3 units per day or less if you are a man, and 2 units or less if you are a woman. One unit is equal to half a pint of ordinary strength beer, or a small glass of wine, or one measure of spirits. Avoid binge drinking.

Try not to smoke

Smoking increases your risk of developing heart disease. Like high blood pressure, it narrows your arteries. Therefore, if you smoke and have high blood pressure, your arteries will narrow even more quickly.

Eat a healthy diet

Try to **eat a balanced diet** and cut down on foods high in sugar, fat and saturated fat (e.g fried food, cakes and biscuits). It is also important to **cut down on salt**.

Researchers have discovered that an eating plan that is rich in fruit, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products and low in salt helps people to have healthy blood pressure. The **DASH low-salt plan** is a simple eating plan that can help you to reduce and even prevent high blood pressure. (DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension). The DASH low-salt plan is easy to adopt as it uses normal foods with no fussy recipes.



Doing the DASH low-salt

How will the DASH low-salt plan lower my blood pressure?

- It is rich in fruit, vegetables and low-fat dairy products which contain potassium, magnesium and calcium – nutrients that are all linked to healthy blood pressure.
- It is low in salt. Reducing your salt intake can help to prevent or reduce high blood pressure.



This is a winning combination when it comes to having healthy blood pressure.

How quickly will the DASH low-salt plan work?

Blood pressure can begin to lower within two weeks of starting the DASH low-salt plan.

Tips for cutting down on salt

On average, we eat about 10 grams (two teaspoons) of salt per day. Salt is sometimes referred to as sodium on food labels. When following the DASH low-salt plan, try to have less than 6 grams (2.4 grams of sodium) per day:

- Use herbs and spices, lemon or lime juice instead of salt, stock cubes or soy sauce
- Choose foods labelled with 'no added salt'
- Use fresh rather than canned, cured or processed meat, fish or poultry wherever possible
- Add salt in cooking or at the table, not both



Doing the DASH low-salt plan

What to eat on the DASH low-salt plan

The DASH low-salt plan is easy to follow

Each day, aim to eat:

- 7-9 portions of foods from the bread, cereals and potatoes food groups
- 5 portions of fruit and vegetables
- 3 portions of low-fat milk and dairy products
- 2 portions of meat, fish or poultry
- no more than 2 or 3 portions of foods containing fat

Over a week, aim to eat:

- 5 portions of nuts, seeds or beans
- no more than 5 portions of foods containing sugar

What counts as a portion?

Bread, cereals and potatoes

Examples of one portion:

- 1 slice of bread or 1 small bread roll
- 1 bowl of breakfast cereal
- 8 tablespoons of cooked pasta or cooked rice
- 1 large jacket potato
- 3 small potatoes (boiled or mashed)
- 1 small pizza base
- 1 fruit scone or 1 fruit teacake
- 2 rice cakes

Try to opt for wholegrain/wholemeal foods

Fruit and vegetables

Examples of one portion:

- 1 medium-sized piece of fruit e.g. an apple, banana, orange or 1 large slice of melon
- 2 small fruits e.g. satsumas or plums
- 2 to 3 tablespoons of fresh fruit salad or cooked or canned fruit (in their own juice rather than syrup)
- 1 tea-cup of strawberries or grapes
- 1 glass of fruit juice
- 1 medium bowl of salad
- 2 tablespoons of vegetables (cooked or raw; fresh, frozen or canned)

Low-fat milk and dairy products

Examples of one portion:

- 1 glass of skimmed or semi-skimmed milk
- 1 match-box sized piece of low-fat cheese
- 1 individual pot of low-fat yogurt or low-fat fromage frais

Meat, fish and poultry

Examples of one portion:

- 2 to 3oz (60 to 90g) of cooked meat, poultry or fish
- 1 egg

Nuts, seeds and beans

Examples of one portion:

- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- 8 tablespoons of cooked lentils or beans
- 4 tablespoons of seeds e.g. sesame seeds
- 5 tablespoons of unsalted nuts

Foods containing fat

Examples of one portion:

- 1 teaspoon of butter or soft margarine
- 1 tablespoon of low-fat mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons of low-fat salad dressing
- 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil

Foods containing sugar

Examples of one portion:

- 1 tablespoon of sugar or jam
- 1 mini/treat-size packet of sweets
- 1 glass of sugar-containing soft drink

Men and those who are more active may have higher energy needs. Therefore, it may be necessary to eat up to 9 portions of bread, cereals and potatoes and 4 portions of low-fat milk and dairy products.

A typical day on the DASH low-salt plan

Breakfast

- Glass of orange juice
- Shredded wheat with skimmed milk

Mid-morning

- Handful of unsalted mixed nuts and raisins
- *Tea or coffee*

Lunch

- Chicken and salad sandwiches
- Fruit salad and yogurt
- *Water*

Mid-afternoon

- Currant bread or fruit scone or fruit teacake
- *Tea or coffee*

Dinner

- Grilled salmon steak with peas
- Jacket potato (topped with low-fat Cheddar cheese)
- Wholemeal roll
- Slice of melon

Getting started

It is easy to follow the DASH low-salt plan – here are some tips to get you started:

- Include a serving of vegetables or salad with lunch
- Eat a low-fat yogurt instead of a stodgy cake or pudding
- Choose fruit as a snack
- Switch to wholegrain breakfast cereals



Hypertension facts

- Most adults can benefit from adopting a lifestyle and diet that helps to control blood pressure.
- For most people there is no one specific cause of hypertension, although it can be linked to kidney problems and specific conditions such as diabetes.
- One third of adults in the UK have hypertension.
- Blood pressure increases as you get older.
- Black and South Asian people are more at risk of hypertension.
- Men have a greater risk of hypertension than women until age 55.

For more DASH low-salt eating plans visit www.milk.co.uk and www.dpp.org.uk