



All About Blood Pressure

Blood pressure measures the force of your blood against blood vessels and artery walls. Hypertension is a condition where blood pressure is consistently too high. Over time, this can cause damage to the delicate cells and tissues in your blood vessels. Untreated high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, and other serious health conditions.

What is a normal blood pressure?

According to the American Heart Association, less than 120/80 is considered normal. Anything at or above this is considered high.¹ The top number is your systolic pressure, which measures the pressure as your heart beats and pushes blood out. The bottom number is your diastolic pressure, which measures the pressure between heart beats.²

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Hypertension is known as a “silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. Some people do have warning signs, though. Here are some of the more common ones:¹

- Blood spots in the eyes
- Dizziness
- Facial flushing

Checking your blood pressure is the only way to know for sure if it is too high.

How does sodium affect blood pressure?

Sodium is an essential mineral that your body needs in small amounts. While high intakes of sodium have been linked to high blood pressure, the reason is not entirely clear. Some experts believe it is because sodium increases water retention, which increases blood volume. However, it may also be related to increased inflammation in blood vessels.³

Most people need about 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day, though people who are more sensitive to sodium may need to restrict further. Always check with your healthcare provider for specific health-related recommendations.

Making small lifestyle changes like reducing sodium, eating more fruits and vegetables, and getting plenty of physical activity can help you maintain healthy blood pressure levels and reduce your risk of many preventable health conditions.

1. American Heart Association. [The Facts About High Blood Pressure](#). May 25, 2023. Accessed Sept 29, 2023.

2. Cleveland Clinic. [High Blood Pressure \(Hypertension\)](#). May 1, 2023. Accessed Sept 5, 2023.

3. Grillo A, Salvi L, Coruzzi P, Salvi P, Parati G. Sodium Intake and Hypertension. *Nutrients*. 2019 Aug 21;11(9):1970. doi: 10.3390/nu11091970. PMID: 31438636; PMCID: PMC6770596.



What is the DASH Diet?

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is an eating style that has been around since 1997.¹ Its claim to fame is that it helps reduce blood pressure, but the diet may also promote weight loss and lower the risk of cancer, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and heart disease.²

The DASH diet focuses on foods that are high in fiber, magnesium, calcium, and potassium, while limiting red meat and other foods that are high in fat, sodium, and sugar.³ In general, the diet encourages higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans (legumes), nuts, seeds, monounsaturated oils, fish, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.¹

The DASH diet also recommends minimizing certain foods:^{1,3}

- **Red meat:** Limit to no more than once or twice a week.
- **Salt:** Limit to 2,300 milligrams (about 1 teaspoon) or less each day.¹
- **Sweets:** Limit candy, sweetened beverages, juices, and baked goods to 5 or fewer servings per week.
- **Saturated fats:** Limit oils and fats that are solid at room temperature.
- **Alcohol:** If you drink, use moderation, which is defined as 2 or fewer drinks per day for men and 1 or fewer drinks per day for women.

One hallmark of the DASH diet is lower levels of sodium. However, evidence is mixed on whether it is necessary to restrict sodium beyond 2,300 mg per day if you follow the DASH eating plan.²

To get started with the DASH diet, look for creative ways to add more fruits and vegetables to your favorite recipes, and choose healthier substitutions when possible.

The DASH diet is not just for people with high blood pressure. Some evidence suggests the diet may also lead to weight loss when paired with a calorie deficit.¹ Regardless of your health goals, eating a balanced diet of nutrient-dense foods like those included with the DASH eating plan can help you achieve better health.

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1. Healthline. [The Complete Beginner's Guide to the DASH Diet](#). Oct 17, 2018. Accessed Sept 9, 2023.
2. Filippou CD, Tsioufis CP, Thomopoulos CG, et al. Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet and Blood Pressure Reduction in Adults with and without Hypertension: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *Adv Nutr*. 2020 Sep 1;11(5):1150-1160. doi: 10.1093/advances/nmaa041. PMID: 32330233; PMCID: PMC7490167.
3. Cleveland Clinic. [DASH Diet: What Is It, Meal Plans and Recipes](#). Jun 18, 2021. Accessed Sept 17, 2023.



Lifestyle Habits to Reduce Blood Pressure Naturally

Your daily choices can have a big impact on your blood pressure. Here are some ways you can support your blood pressure through healthy lifestyle changes:^{1,2,3}

- **Eat whole foods.** The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) encourages whole foods, which provide a wide range of nutrients like potassium, magnesium, and fiber. The DASH diet has been shown to reduce blood pressure by about 11 points.²
- **Limit or eliminate alcohol.** Limiting or eliminating alcohol can help reduce blood pressure and prevent liver damage.
- **Stay active.** Exercise may reduce blood pressure by about 5 to 8 points.² Find ways to weave more movement into your daily routines and work your way up to getting at least 150 minutes of activity each week.
- **Reduce stress.** Stress triggers the release of hormones that can raise blood pressure. When possible, limit your exposure to stress and choose effective self-care strategies to manage stress when you cannot.
- **Quit smoking.** Quitting smoking can prevent damage to blood vessels walls and reduce inflammation.
- **Monitor your blood pressure.** If you have hypertension, monitor your blood pressure between doctor's visits and keep a log of any levels that are higher than normal.
- **Use less salt.** Limit your sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. Reducing sodium can reduce blood pressure by 5 to 6 points.² Try these substitutions to reduce sodium:

| Instead of... | Try... |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Table salt | Fresh herbs & spices |
| Garlic salt | Fresh garlic or garlic powder |
| Canned soup | Lower sodium varieties of canned soups with less than 150 mg of sodium per serving |
| Pickles | Sliced cucumbers with vinegar and fresh dill |
| Microwave popcorn with salt & butter | Air popped corn kernels + nutritional yeast flakes |

It is important to know that kosher salt and sea salt contain the same amount of sodium as table salt. Be sure to talk with your doctor first before using salt substitutes as these products may not be appropriate for people with kidney disease, diabetes, or liver disease.

1. Cleveland Clinic. [High Blood Pressure \(Hypertension\)](#). May 1, 2023. Accessed Sept 29, 2023.
2. Mayo Clinic. [10 ways to control high blood pressure without medication](#). Jul 12, 2022. Accessed Sept 28, 2023.
3. Healthline. [18 Effective Ways to Lower Your Blood Pressure](#). Accessed Sept 29, 2023.

HOLIDAY COBB SALAD

Prep Time

20 minutes

Servings

6

Ingredients

- 1 pkg. (9 oz.) Hearts of Romaine
- Apple-Bleu Cheese Vinaigrette (see recipe below)
- 2 cups cubed roasted turkey
- 2 cups cooked Brussels Sprouts, sliced
- 2 cups cooked Sweet Potatoes
- 1 large tomato, cored and cut into ½-inch pieces
- ½-inch pieces 1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and diced
- 1 Apple, cored and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 cup Blackberries

Instructions

Toss Hearts of Romaine with Apple-Bleu Cheese Vinaigrette.

Arrange romaine on large serving plate. Arrange turkey, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, avocado, apple and blackberries in long, narrow rows on top of the romaine.

Apple Bleu Cheese Vinaigrette: Combine 3 tablespoons apple cider, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, 1 tablespoon honey, 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper, in small bowl. Whisk in 3 tablespoons olive oil. Whisk in ¼ cup crumbled bleu cheese.



Nutrition Facts (with dressing)

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Calories | 538 |
| Total Fat | 26g |
| Sodium | 368mg |
| Carbohydrate | 31g |
| Dietary Fiber | 7g |
| Protein | 46g |