

DASH Diet

- [#2 in Best Diets Overall](#)

Overall Score 4.0/5



What is DASH Diet?

This diet has been reviewed by U.S. News' team of expert panelists. [Learn more](#)

The DASH diet, which stands for dietary approaches to stop hypertension, is promoted by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute to do exactly that: stop (or prevent) hypertension, aka high blood pressure. It emphasizes the foods you've always been told to eat (fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy), which are high in blood pressure-deflating nutrients like potassium, calcium, protein and fiber.

DASH also discourages foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy foods and tropical oils, as well as sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets. Following DASH also means capping sodium at 2,300 milligrams a day, which followers will eventually lower to about 1,500 milligrams. DASH diet is balanced and can be followed long term.

A review of [studies published in 2021 in StatPearls](#), which calls itself the largest library of medical education in the world, suggests that the DASH diet is associated with lowering:

- [Blood pressure](#).
- The risk of adverse [cardiac events](#).
- Stroke.
- [Type 2 diabetes](#).
- Obesity.

A study published in 2019 in Scientific Reports suggests that adhering to the DASH diet is associated with “better metabolic profiles.” Researchers found that, compared to metabolic healthy obesity, “greater adherence to the DASH diet was associated with 21% lower odds of metabolic unhealthy obesity” regardless of age, sex, energy intake, physical activity, body-mass index, smoking and educational level.

[Research published](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that the DASH diet is associated with reductions in systolic blood pressure and diastolic blood pressure.

Balanced Diet

[These diets](#) fall within accepted ranges for the amount of protein, carbs, fat and other nutrients they provide.

Pros & Cons

- Heart healthy
- Nutritionally sound
- Lots of grunt work
- Somewhat pricey

U.S. News Best Diet Rankings

DASH Diet ranked #2 in [Best Diets Overall](#). 40 diets were evaluated with input from a panel of health experts. See how we rank diets [here](#).

DASH Diet is ranked:

- [#2](#)
[in Best Diets Overall \(tie\)](#)
- [#25](#)
[in Best Fast Weight-Loss Diets \(tie\)](#)
- [#10](#)
[in Best Weight-Loss Diets \(tie\)](#)
- [#3](#)
[in Best Heart-Healthy Diets](#)
- [#5](#)
[in Best Diabetes Diets \(tie\)](#)
- [#2](#)
[in Best Diets for Healthy Eating \(tie\)](#)
- [#6](#)
[in Easiest Diets to Follow](#)

4.0/5

Scorecard

- **3.0/5** Short-Term Weight Loss
- **3.3/5** Long-Term Weight Loss
- **3.1/5** Easy to Follow
- **4.7/5** Healthy

Scores are based on [experts' reviews](#).



How does DASH Diet work?

[Do's & Don'ts](#)

[Do: Serve up lean poultry and fish in moderation.](#)

[Learn More »](#)

Starting DASH doesn't mean making drastic changes overnight. Instead, begin by making whatever small changes seem most manageable to you. For example:

- Add one vegetable or fruit serving to every meal.
- Introduce two or more meat-free meals each week.
- [Use herbs and spices](#) to make food tastier without the salt.
- Snack on almonds or pecans instead of a bag of chips.
- Switch white flour to whole-wheat flour when possible.
- Take a 15-minute walk after lunch or dinner (or both).

For more guidance, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute publishes free guides on the plan, including one (PDF [here](#)) that's 20 pages and one (PDF [here](#)) that's six. They'll help you determine how many calories you should eat for your age and activity level, tell you [where those calories should come from](#) and remind you to go easy on salt.

How does the DASH Diet Support You?

If you're looking to start the DASH diet or have already begun your dieting journey, it's helpful to know the different ways you can receive support throughout the process. Below are a few examples of how the DASH diet can support you:

- The [DASH diet website](#) offers cookbooks, recipes, community support and plenty of background information.
- DASH diet books and cookbooks: "[The DASH Diet Weight Loss Solution](#)" includes a complete plan, with 28 days of meal plans, over 45 recipes and the complete lifestyle plan to lose weight, lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol. "[The DASH Diet Younger You](#)" is a vegetarian version of the DASH diet complete with 28 days of meal plans and over 75 recipes.
- Unofficial DASH diet blogs and public Facebook support groups.
- Meal Delivery: [NutriFit Meal Delivery](#) delivers freshly prepared meals.
- The NHLBI offers more than 180 [heart-healthy recipes](#) in its [online database](#). Lots of reputable organizations, like the Mayo Clinic, provide long lists of [DASH-friendly recipes](#).

What can I eat?

Easy omelet

Combine eggs, chives and reduced fat cheddar cheese into a quick breakfast that can provide you with a foundation for the day. You may also consider adding veggies, such as spinach or asparagus.

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How much does DASH Diet cost?

The DASH diet can be on the expensive side, since fresh fruits, veggies and whole-grain products are generally pricier than the processed, fatty, sugary foods most Americans consume.

Will DASH Diet help you lose weight?

You'll likely lose weight on the DASH diet, provided you follow the rules, and especially if you design your plan with a calorie deficit.

How easy is DASH Diet to follow?

The DASH Diet is ranked [#6 in Easiest Diets to Follow](#)
[See how other diets ranked](#)

While it may be difficult to [give up your favorite fatty, sugary and salty fare](#), DASH doesn't restrict entire food groups, upping your chances of sticking with it long term. (However, in the more than 20 years since DASH was first released, [studies](#) have consistently found low adherence among the general population, to the concern of public health experts.)

Following DASH is pretty convenient. Recipe options are boundless, and the NHLBI offers tips on following the dietary approach, including [reducing sodium](#) when dining out or cooking at home. What's more, for those who wish to have a little more flexibility, it's possible to substitute some protein or unsaturated fat for a portion of daily carbs – 10% of those – and still realize heart health benefits from DASH, according to research.

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Eating out is possible on the DASH diet, but proceed with caution. Restaurant meals are notoriously salty, oversized and fatty, so you'll need to be conscientious if you dine out. NHLBI suggests avoiding salt by shunning pickled, cured or smoked items; limiting condiments; choosing fruits or vegetables instead of soup; and requesting the chef find other ways to season your meal. You can also drink alcohol moderately on the DASH diet.

DASH can be time-consuming. You'll need to plan your meals, shop for them and prepare them. Exercise is important too.

DASH diet resources are easily accessible. NHLBI's PDF guide serves up a week of DASH meal plans, offers tips on reading nutrition labels, lists the sodium and potassium content of various foods and provides exercise ideas.

You don't have to worry too much about going hungry on DASH. Nutrition experts stress the importance of satiety, the satisfied feeling that you've had enough. DASH emphasizes lean protein and fiber-filled fruits and veggies, which should keep you feeling full, even if you've reduced your calorie level slightly to support weight loss.

If you love salt, you'll probably struggle to enjoy DASH at first. Your taste buds should eventually adjust, though, to the low-salt diet. Avoid blandness by [getting friendly with herbs and spices](#).

How much should you exercise on DASH Diet?

Exercise is recommended on the DASH diet, especially if you want to lose weight.

To get started, try a 15-minute walk around the block each morning and night, and then slowly ratchet up intensity and duration if you can. Just find activities you like (jazzercise, swimming, gardening), set goals and stick to them.

[Expert Reviews](#)
[Health & Nutrition](#)