

# Simple Ways to Improve Blood Pressure

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## What can you do to lower your blood pressure?

- Stop smoking and reduce alcohol intake.
- Increase physical activity 150min/week or more. Balance cardio and resistance training.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit sodium. Aim for less than 2300 mg of sodium/day
- Get adequate potassium through your food.
- Consider the DASH Diet. Start by limiting high fat foods and refined carbohydrates.
- Eat the right types of fat. Focus on consuming food high in Omega-3s.
- Find healthy ways to reduce stress.

## Blood Pressure Categories

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

Source: American Heart Association

## Best food sources of potassium:

dried fruit, beans, lentils, potatoes, squash, greens, avocado, and bananas

## Tips to reduce sodium

- Read food labels: the sodium should be less than 300 mg per serving.
- Choose low-sodium or no-added salt options.
- Choose fresh or frozen over pre-seasoned.
- Restaurants and fast food are often higher in salt. Eating at home allows for more control.
- When cooking, limit your use of premade sauces, mixes, and instant products.
- Flavor foods with herbs and spices!

## How can I reduce stress?

Learning how to manage stress can improve your mental and physical health. Consider healthy stress-reducing activities such as:

1. Talking with friends, family, community, or religious support systems
2. Consulting with a professional counselor (We offer this service at RCH!)
3. Practicing meditation or listening to calming music
4. Being physically active

# Weight Loss for Health and Hypertension

Did you know, losing just 5% of your body weight can improve blood pressure readings, lower “bad” LDL cholesterol, increase “good” HDL cholesterol?

## Strategies to reach a healthy weight include:

1. Follow a healthy diet and if you are overweight or obesity, reduce your daily intake by 500 calories.
2. Increase your physical activity - for weight loss, work up to 300 minutes of moderate or 150 minutes of vigorous activity per week. Include strength training at least twice a week.
3. Aim to be active at least 5 days per week.
4. Limit the time you spend being physically inactive. Try standing or stretching every hour. Set a step goal or start an active hobby.

### Moderate-intensity aerobic activity\*

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.



### Muscle-strengthening activity

Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.



AND

\* If you prefer vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (like running), aim for at least 75 minutes a week.

Source: CDC

# DASH

The DASH Eating Plan Basics: a heart healthy approach that is proven to help lower blood pressure!



**Eat This**



**Limit This**

	Vegetables		Fatty meats
	Fruits		Full-fat dairy
	Whole grains		Sugar sweetened beverages
	Fat-free or low-fat dairy		Sweets
	Fish		Sodium intake
	Poultry		
	Beans		
	Nuts & seeds		
	Vegetable oils		

Source: National Institutes of Health

## Work toward having these foods at every meal:

### Fruits and Vegetables

- The more the merrier!
- Look for fresh, frozen or no salt-added canned.

### Whole Grains

- Includes oatmeal, grits, brown rice, quinoa, unsalted popcorn, corn tortillas, whole grain cereal, whole wheat bread, and whole wheat pasta

### Lean Meat, Fish, Poultry, and Beans

- “Lean” refers to low in fat.
- Better choices include plant protein (beans, legumes, soy, seeds), poultry without skin, fresh or low sodium canned fish and non-fat dairy.

### Small Amount of Healthy Fats

- The best choices are omega 3s which include seeds, nuts, avocado and fatty fish.
- Other options include vegetable oil (such as canola, olive, or safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, and light salad dressings (low in sugar)