

## Healthy Eating to Control Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a serious condition that can lead to coronary artery disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, & other vascular problems. People with high blood pressure can take steps to control it. While making dietary and lifestyle changes can improve your blood pressure, it is important to keep taking your high blood pressure medication.

### Lifestyle factors to improve blood pressure:

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Do at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.
- If you smoke, try to quit.
- Follow a healthy eating plan.
  - Limit your intake of foods with added salt.
  - Increase your intake of foods rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, and healthy phytonutrients. These include low fat dairy, nuts, whole grains, and fruits & vegetables.

### Follow these steps to limit sodium in the diet.

#### **1. Salt contains sodium. Read food labels to determine sodium content.**

- These list the amount of sodium in one serving of the food.
- % Daily Value (%DV) is the percentage of the daily sodium limit (2400mg) contained in one serving of the food.
- If the %DV is less than 10% then the food is not so high in sodium but if it is 25% or more, try to choose a lower sodium option.

#### **2. Know your limit.**

- **If you have heart health risk factors, aim to consume less than 1500 mg of sodium each day.** This means getting **less than 2/3 of a teaspoon of salt** from all dietary sources.
- If you do *not* have risk factors for heart disease, aim to keep intake under 2,300 mg per day of sodium. This is equal to about 1 teaspoon of salt.

#### **3. Buy foods without added sodium.**

- Even if you do not add salt to your foods, your diet may be high in sodium. Almost all our salt intake is from sodium added to foods by manufacturers.
- So, skip the bottles, boxes, cans, and seasoned products. Purchase fresh or frozen whole foods such as lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, dry whole grains and beans, unsalted nuts, and unsalted dairy products. When purchasing canned, choose "no-salt added" products. Canned foods with added salt can be rinsed to remove some of the salt.
- Even when a product is "reduced sodium" it may still be high in sodium. Check the label.

#### **4. Take charge of the salt content of your foods.**

- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends. Condiments (e.g. ketchup, salad dressing, mustard) are high in sodium.
- Consider replacing your table salt with a no-sodium salt substitute (potassium chloride) or a reduced-sodium salt substitute that is a combination of sodium chloride and potassium chloride. Do not use potassium chloride if you have kidney disease.
- Cook at home. Restaurants and fast food vendors add a staggering amount of sodium to their foods. When eating out, request sauces and dressings be served on the side.
- Special salts such as sea, Kosher, Himalayan are no healthier and lack the iodine of regular salt.

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## SALTY FOODS TO AVOID

Below is a list of some of the saltiest foods in our food supply. Some foods that are high in sodium actually do not taste very salty. For example, bread is often high in sodium but because the salt is baked in it does not taste very salty. Note and compare labels to find products that are low in added sodium.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accent<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Adobo seasoning</li> <li>• Alka-seltzer<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Anchovies</li> <li>• Bacon</li> <li>• Bologna</li> <li>• Bouillon cubes</li> <li>• Canned soups</li> <li>• Capers</li> <li>• Caviar</li> <li>• Cheese Whiz<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Cheetos<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Chinese food</li> <li>• Cold cuts</li> <li>• Corn chips</li> <li>• Corned beef</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast food items</li> <li>• Fatback</li> <li>• Feta cheese</li> <li>• Fish sauce</li> <li>• Fritos<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Garlic salt</li> <li>• Ham</li> <li>• Hot dogs</li> <li>• Kosher meat</li> <li>• Lox</li> <li>• MSG</li> <li>• Olives</li> <li>• Oyster sauce</li> <li>• Parmesan cheese</li> <li>• Pickles</li> <li>• Pastrami</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pepperoni</li> <li>• Pizza</li> <li>• Potato chips</li> <li>• Ramen &amp; Cup o' Noodle</li> <li>• Restaurant food</li> <li>• Salad dressing</li> <li>• Salami</li> <li>• Salt, sea salt, Kosher salt</li> <li>• Salted nuts</li> <li>• Salt pork</li> <li>• Sauerkraut</li> <li>• Sausage</li> <li>• Smoked meat &amp; fish</li> <li>• Soy sauce</li> <li>• Spaghetti sauce</li> <li>• Tomato juice &amp; V-8<sup>®</sup></li> </ul> |
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## MINERAL- & PHYTONUTRIENT-RICH FOODS TO INCLUDE

Below are some of the items richest in blood pressure-friendly minerals & phytonutrients. Overall, emphasize plant-based foods. Consume a diet rich in fruits & vegetables, nuts, beans, low fat dairy, & whole grains.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artichokes</li> <li>• Avocados</li> <li>• Bananas</li> <li>• Beets</li> <li>• Blackberries</li> <li>• Blueberries</li> <li>• Brussels sprouts</li> <li>• Cherries</li> <li>• Dark chocolate (70% or more cocoa)</li> <li>• Dark leafy greens (especially beet greens, collards, spinach, turnip greens, kale)</li> <li>• Garlic</li> <li>• Guava</li> <li>• Hibiscus tea</li> <li>• Lentils &amp; beans (especially white, soy, &amp; lima beans)</li> <li>• Low fat/fat-free ricotta</li> <li>• Low fat/nonfat milk</li> <li>• Nuts (especially Brazil, almond, cashew)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oat bran &amp; wheat bran</li> <li>• Okra</li> <li>• Olive oil</li> <li>• Oranges</li> <li>• Papaya</li> <li>• Plain low fat/nonfat yogurt</li> <li>• Pomegranate</li> <li>• Red &amp; purple grapes</li> <li>• Salmon &amp; other fatty fish</li> <li>• Seeds (especially sunflower, flax, &amp; pumpkin)</li> <li>• Sweet potato, yam, &amp; white potato, with skin (do not boil as water leaches nutrients)</li> <li>• Tofu</li> <li>• Tomatoes</li> <li>• Turmeric</li> <li>• Winter squash</li> <li>• Carrots</li> </ul> |
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**Check out the Dash Eating Plan.** The DASH diet is aimed at lowering blood pressure. It is low in sodium and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy & other foods high in potassium, magnesium, & calcium. For detailed information on DASH, go online to: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm>.