

Waist Circumference and Family History

Additional factors to consider in assessing your high blood pressure risk are waist circumference and personal and family history. Fat accumulation around the waist and within your abdomen is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure and your diseases. If your BMI is greater than or equal to 25, your goal for waist circumference is less than or equal to 40 inches if you are a man and less than or equal to 35 inches if you are a woman.

Coupled with a high BMI, a family history of weight-related illness or considerable weight-related illness or considerable weight gain since high school means you are even greater risk for developing high blood pressure.

Nutrition and High Blood Pressure

Good nutrition is a cornerstone of good health. It is not only about limiting foods like salt or saturated fats but also about including foods that can actually have a positive impact on your blood pressure management. Including more fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and even nuts, which provide potassium, magnesium, fiber and calcium, will help to lower high blood pressure and manage weight. Obesity itself puts you at greater risk for high blood pressure.

So what are you supposed to eat?

Consumers are flooded with information and resources on nutrition, different diets and suggested eating habits. Diet trends are frequently in the news and are constantly changing. How do you make sense of this nutrition information overload?

One way to start is by reviewing some basic dietary guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA). The table on the next page is based on the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan and can aid in menu planning and food selection in restaurants and grocery stores.

Good Nutrition Is a Cornerstone of Good Health

Food Groups Recommended Daily Servings* Sample Serving Sizes

Grains

7-8 servings

- 1 slice bread
- 1 oz dry cereal
- 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal

Vegetables

4-5 servings

- 1 cup raw leafy vegetable
- 1/2 cup cooked vegetables
- 6 oz vegetable juice

Fruits

4-5 servings

- 6 oz fruit juice
- 1 medium fruit
- 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 1/2 cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit

Low-Fat or Fat-Free Dairy Foods

2-3 servings

- 8 oz milk
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 1/2 oz cheese

Meat, Poultry, Fish

2 or less servings

3 oz cooked meats, poultry or fish

Nuts, Seeds, Legumes

4-5 servings/week

- 1/3 cup or 1 1/2 oz nuts
- 2 Tbsp or 1/2 oz seeds
- 1/2 cup cooked dry beans or peas

Fats and Oils

2-3 servings

- 1 tsp soft margarine
- 1 Tbsp low-fat mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp light salad dressing
- 1 tsp vegetable oil

Sweets

5 servings/week

- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp jelly or jam
- 1/2 oz jelly beans
- 8 oz lemonade

Suggested Foods

Benefits of Food Group

Whole wheat bread, brown rice, English muffin, pita, pasta, bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, unsalted pretzels, popcorn
Major sources of energy and fiber

Tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, green peas, squash, broccoli, turnip greens, collards, kale, spinach, artichokes, green beans, lima beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes
Rich sources of potassium, magnesium and fiber

Apricots, bananas, dates, grapes, oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, mangoes, melons, peaches, apples, pineapples, prunes, raisins, strawberries, tangerines berries
Important sources of potassium, magnesium and fiber

Fat-free or low-fat milk, soymilk or buttermilk, regular or frozen yogurt, low-fat ricotta cheese
Major sources of calcium and protein

Select only lean meats; trim away visible fats; remove skin
Rich sources of protein and magnesium

Almonds, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, lentils, black-eyed peas, chick peas, black beans
Rich sources of energy, magnesium, potassium and fiber

Soft margarine, low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing, vegetable, olive, corn, canola, or safflower oil-select unsaturated fats over saturated and trans fats
Unsaturated fats may help lower blood cholesterol level when used in place of saturated fats in your diet

Maple syrup, sugar jelly/jam, fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit candy, fruit punch, sorbet, ices, ice creams, chocolate
Sweets should be low in fat