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Following the DASH Eating Plan

The DASH eating plan is easy to follow using common foods available in your grocery store. The plan includes daily servings from different food groups. The number of servings you should have depends on your daily calorie (energy) needs.

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Following the DASH Eating Plan

MENU

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Getting Started



DASH is a flexible and balanced eating plan that helps create a heart-healthy eating style for life. Download the materials below to help you get started.

- [Getting Started on DASH](#)
- [DASH Eating Plan: Healthy Eating, Proven Results](#)
- [Making the Move to DASH](#)
- [Tips to Reduce Salt and Sodium](#)
- [A Week with the DASH Eating Plan](#)
- [Tips To Keep on Track](#)
- [Why the DASH Eating Plan Works](#)
- [What's on Your Plate? \(1,200 calories/day\)](#)
- [What's on Your Plate? \(1,400-1,600 calories/day\)](#)
- [What's on Your Plate? \(1,800-2,000 calories/day\)](#)
- [What's on Your Plate? \(2,600 calories/day\)](#)

Calorie Needs

To figure out your calorie needs, you need to consider your age and physical activity level. If you want to maintain your current weight, you should eat only as many calories as you burn by being physically active. This is called energy balance. (For more information about energy balance, go to the Health Topics [Overweight and Obesity](#) article.)

If you need to lose weight, you should eat fewer calories than you burn or increase your activity level to burn more calories than you eat.

Consider your physical activity level. Are you sedentary, moderately active, or active?

- Sedentary means that you do only light physical activity as part of your typical daily routine.
- Moderately active means that you do physical activity equal to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles a day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, plus light physical activity.

- Active means that you do physical activity equal to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, plus light physical activity.

Use the chart below to estimate your daily calorie needs.

Daily Calorie Needs for Women

Age (years)	Calories Needed for Sedentary Activity Level	Calories Needed for Moderately Active Activity Level	Calories Needed for Active Activity Level
19–30	2,000	2,000–2,200	2,400
31–50	1,800	2,000	2,200
51+	1,600	1,800	2,000–2,200

Daily Calorie Needs for Men

Age (years)	Calories Needed for Sedentary Activity Level	Calories Needed for Moderately Active Activity Level	Calories Needed for Active Activity Level
19–30	2,400	2,600–2,800	3,000
31–50	2,200	2,400–2,600	2,800–3,000
51+	2,000	2,200–2,400	2,400–2,800

After figuring out your daily calorie needs, go to the table below and find the closest calorie level to yours. This table estimates the number of servings from each food group that you should have. Serving quantities are per day, unless otherwise noted.

DASH Eating Plan—Number of Food Servings by Calorie Level

Food Group	1,200 Cal.	1,400 Cal.	1,600 Cal.	1,800 Cal.	2,000 Cal.	2,600 Cal.	3,100 Cal.
Grains^a	4–5	5–6	6	6	6–8	10–11	12–13
Vegetables	3–4	3–4	3–4	4–5	4–5	5–6	6
Fruits	3–4	4	4	4–5	4–5	5–6	6
Fat-free or low-fat dairy products^b	2–3	2–3	2–3	2–3	2–3	3	3–4
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	3 or less	3–4 or less	3–4 or less	6 or less	6 or less	6 or less	6–9

Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3 per week	3 per week	3–4 per week	4 per week	4–5 per week	1	1
Fats and oils ^c	1	1	2	2–3	2–3	3	4
Sweets and added sugars	3 or less per week	3 or less per week	3 or less per week	5 or less per week	5 or less per week	≤2	≤2
Maximum sodium limit ^d	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day	2,300 mg/day

- a Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.
- b For lactose intolerance, try either lactase enzyme pills with dairy products or lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk.
- c Fat content changes the serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp regular salad dressing = one serving; 1 Tbsp low-fat dressing = one-half serving; 1 Tbsp fat-free dressing = zero servings.
- d The DASH eating plan has a sodium limit of either 2,300 mg or 1,500 mg per day.

DASH Eating Plan—Serving Sizes, Examples, and Significance

Food Group	Serving Sizes	Examples and Notes	Significance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Plan
Grains ^a	1 slice bread	Whole-wheat bread and rolls, whole-wheat pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn	Major sources of energy and fiber
	1 oz dry cereals ^b		
	½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal ^b		
Vegetables	1 cup raw leafy vegetable	Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
	½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable		
	½ cup vegetable juice		

	1 medium fruit		
	¼ cup dried fruit	Apples, apricots, bananas, dates, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, mangoes, melons, peaches, pineapples, raisins, strawberries, tangerines	Important sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
Fruits	½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit		
	½ cup fruit juice		
Fat-free or low-fat dairy products^c	1 cup milk or yogurt	Fat-free milk or buttermilk; fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese; fat-free/low-fat regular or frozen yogurt	Major sources of calcium and protein
	1½ oz cheese		
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish	Select only lean; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
	1 egg		
	⅓ cup or 1½ oz nuts		
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	2 Tbsp peanut butter	Almonds, filberts, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, kidney beans, lentils, split peas	Rich sources of energy, magnesium, protein, and fiber
	2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds		
	½ cup cooked legumes (dried beans, peas)		
	1 tsp soft margarine		The DASH study had 27% of calories as
Fats and oils^d	1 tsp vegetable oil	Soft margarine, vegetable oil (canola, corn, olive, safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing	fat, including fat in or added to foods
	1 Tbsp mayonnaise		
	2 Tbsp salad dressing		
	1 Tbsp sugar		
Sweets and added sugars	1 Tbsp jelly or jam	Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup, sorbet and ices, sugar	Sweets should be low in fat
	½ cup sorbet, gelatin dessert		
	1 cup lemonade		

^a Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

b Serving sizes vary between ½ cup and 1¼ cups, depending on cereal type. Check the product's Nutrition Facts label.

c For lactose intolerance, try either lactase enzyme pills with dairy products or lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk.

d Fat content changes the serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp regular salad dressing = one serving; 1 Tbsp low-fat dressing = one-half serving; 1 Tbsp fat-free dressing = zero servings.

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