

# What Foods Can You Eat On The DASH Diet?



The DASH diet focuses on eating fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, whole grains, poultry, fish and nuts, and includes many delicious foods.

**Grains:** eg bagels, bread, breadsticks, cereals, crackers, granola (unsweetened), muesli (unsweetened), oatmeal, pasta, pizza bases, rice, unsalted pretzels or unsalted popcorn.

Good alternatives to wheat include rye, buckwheat (which despite its name is a gluten-free member of the rhubarb family), hempseed, brown rice, red rice (Camargue or Bhutan), wild rice (a grass seed), corn meal, amaranth, teff, quinoa, gram/chickpea flour, millet and tapioca.

Ideally select wholegrain or brown, seeded products rather than processed white/beige versions as these contain significantly more magnesium and fibre. You can also experiment with making your own breads and pizza bases, using artisan flours.

When cooking rice and pasta, avoid adding salt.

Unless you want to lose weight, aim to eat 7 servings of wholegrains per day. If you want to lose weight, then eat fewer servings.

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**Vegetables:** eg artichokes, asparagus, aubergine/eggplant, avocado (really a fruit) beetroot, broccoli, carrots, chard, courgette/zucchini, cucumber, kale, mushrooms, okra, peppers, tomatoes, mangetout/green peas, green/string/runner beans, spinach, squash/pumpkin, sweet potatoes - the list of possibilities is endless.

Buy vegetables fresh, plain frozen or canned/tinned with no added salt/brine. Similarly, minimise your intake of pickles, sauerkraut or other vegetable products which tend to be high in added salt.

Aim to eat 4 to 5 portions of vegetables per day as they are a super-healthy source of antioxidants, phytonutrients, potassium, magnesium, fibre and other blood-pressure lowering ingredients.

Avoid white potatoes which can cause blood pressure to rise.

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**Fruit:** eg apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, cherries, dates, figs, grapes, guava, grapefruit (check for medication interactions), mango, melons, nectarines, olives, oranges, papaya/pawpaw, peaches, pineapple, pomegranate, prunes, raisins, raspberries,

satsumas, strawberries, tangerines, watermelon and so on – whatever is in season and reasonably cheap.

Aim to eat 4 to 5 servings of fruit per day as they are full of fibre, potassium, magnesium, antioxidants and other beneficial micronutrients.

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**Nuts** (unsalted): eg almonds, Brazils, cashews, chestnuts, coconuts, filberts, hazelnuts, macadamias, mixed nuts, peanuts (a legume), pecans, pine kernels, pistachios, tigernuts (actually a vegetable) walnuts;

**Seeds:** eg chia, flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower,

Nuts and seeds are sources of magnesium, potassium, protein, fibre and beneficial fatty acids. Aim to eat a handful (60g) of unsalted nuts and seeds a day.

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**Pulses:** eg black beans, black-eyed peas, broad/fava beans, butter/lima beans, chickpeas/garbanzo beans, flageolet/haricot beans, mung beans, navy beans, pinto beans, red kidney/cannellini beans, all colours of lentil, soy beans, white beans.

Beans/pulses are an excellent plant-based source of protein for when you are cutting back on red meat and are an excellent source of magnesium and other beneficial minerals.

Aim to eat a portion of beans every day.

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**Dairy:** Low-fat or fat-free milk, low-fat buttermilk, unsweetened bio yogurt, cheese, crème fraîche or fromage frais.

Eggs are a good choice, too, and you can normally eat one or two a day even if you have a raised cholesterol (unless your doctor has specifically advised you not to).

The original DASH diet recommended selecting fat-free or low fat milk. However, even full fat milk is only 5% fat – in any other food this would be deemed low fat.

Dairy foods are a good source of protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium and vitamins. Aim to eat 2 or 3 servings per day.



**Meat and Fish:** If you eat red meat, select lean cuts that are trimmed of visible fat. Remove skin from chicken, duck, goose and other poultry.

The DASH diet typically provided between 1 and 2 servings of meat, fish or poultry a day.

Aim to eat smaller amounts of red meat and select beans/pulses, poultry or fish instead. The World Cancer Research Fund recommends an intake of less than 500g (18 oz) red meat (beef, pork, lamb, goat etc) per week, for example, very little (if any) of which should be processed.

Oily fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, pilchards and tuna are fine because of the health-benefits of the omega-3s they provide. If eating tinned tuna, select products that don't need draining, or which are canned in olive oil or spring water – not brine.

Cook meat and fish by grilling/broiling, roasting or boiling rather than frying.

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**Fats and Oils:** low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing, olive oil.

Use minimally – 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil per day has beneficial effects on blood pressure.

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**Fluids:** Drink water, club soda, vegetable juice (including tomato juice although strictly speaking it's a fruit), fruit juice (ideally diluted with water to reduce sugar intake), herbal, black and green teas.

Check labels of bought foods as those that are labelled as low fat or fat free sometimes have a higher calorie count than the regular versions due to added sugar. Where possible, select reduced sodium or no-added-salt products.

## **Foods to eat less of on the DASH diet**

The DASH diet is relatively low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, red meats, salted or sugar snacks such as crisps/chips, sugar, sweet foods (desserts, confectionery) and sugared drinks.

Replace candy/milk chocolate with dark chocolate which has beneficial effects on blood pressure. Sweeten foods, when necessary, with fruit, Stevia extracts or a little maple syrup, honey or agave nectar.

Select whole foods where possible, as processed, instant, frozen and other convenience foods tend to have a high salt content (check labels and select those that are as low salt/sodium as possible).

Don't add salt at the table, and flavour foods with herbs, spices, lemon or lime juice, vinegar or salt-free seasonings. Limit even low sodium versions of soy/teriyaki/tamari sauce, monosodium glutamate (MSG), barbecue and other sauces.