



## Looking to lower your blood pressure and cholesterol?

The DASH diet can help you improve your health and well-being

### What is the DASH diet?

**Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH)** is designed to improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels by having less sodium in your diet. It focuses on fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, whole grains and lean protein, which are rich in key nutrients such as potassium, calcium and magnesium, that help lower blood pressure. The DASH diet has other health benefits such as losing weight. Here are five steps you can take to start following the DASH plan today and improve your overall health and well-being:



#### Eat more fresh fruits and veggies.

Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium and high in potassium — a nutrient linked to lower blood pressure. They're also rich in fiber and low in calories, which can help you lose weight. To include more fruits and veggies in your diet, try these tips:

- Have a piece of fruit for a snack or include fruit with meals. For example, have a bowl of oatmeal or whole grain cold cereal with sliced bananas and strawberries for breakfast. For a quick snack, have an apple and peanut butter.
- Add vegetables like spinach, kale or carrots to fruit-based smoothies. Enjoy a large salad with protein for lunch or include one cup of cooked veggies (like steamed broccoli) or raw veggies with dinner. Try raw veggies with hummus or another favorite dip for a mid-morning or afternoon snack.



#### Choose low-fat dairy products.

Dairy products such as yogurt and milk are rich in calcium and potassium — two nutrients that help control your blood pressure. Focus on low-fat or fat-free products, which are lower in saturated fat and calories. Eating a diet low in saturated fat reduces LDL or “bad” cholesterol and may prevent heart disease. Limit full-fat cheese as it's high in sodium and saturated fat.



### Focus on nuts, seeds and legumes (beans).

Nuts, seeds and beans are good sources of protein, magnesium and potassium. Nuts and seeds also contain heart-healthy fat and beans are high in fiber — both of which protect you from heart disease. Remember to choose low-sodium versions of nuts and beans. To have more nuts and beans in your diet, check out these ideas:

- Add chopped or slivered nuts or beans to salads.
- Make a bean-based chili for lunch or dinner.
- Eat raw veggies and hummus (which is made from chickpeas) for a snack.
- Add chopped nuts to hot or cold cereal or yogurt.
- Make a trail mix with nuts and dried fruit.



### Include lean protein with meals and snacks.

Protein foods like meat, chicken, fish and seafood are good sources of B-vitamins, iron and zinc. Having a small portion with meals can help keep you satisfied longer. Choose lower-fat cooking methods like baking, broiling, roasting or grilling. Avoid fattier cuts of red meat which are high in saturated fat and cholesterol.



### Cut back on added sugars and alcohol.

Foods and drinks that are high in sugar add extra empty calories and can cause you to gain weight. Having an occasional dessert or soda is fine, but don't make it an everyday choice. Finally, drinking too much alcohol can cause high blood pressure. Men should limit alcohol intake to no more than two drinks per day and women no more than one drink per day. (One alcoholic drink is equal to either 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor).

