

# DASH Study: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

## Q: Hypertension: Who has it?

Approximately 43 million Americans have hypertension (high blood pressure), a major risk factor for two of the leading causes of death in this country - heart disease and stroke.

- About one in four adults has high blood pressure (greater than 140/90 mm Hg).
- Only 47 percent of adults have ideal blood pressure (less than 120/80 mm Hg).
- After age 50, the incidence of high blood pressure increases.
- More African-Americans have hypertension than Caucasians.

## Q: What are the Risk Factors for Hypertension?

- Excessive body weight
- High salt or sodium intake
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Sedentary lifestyles
- Smoking

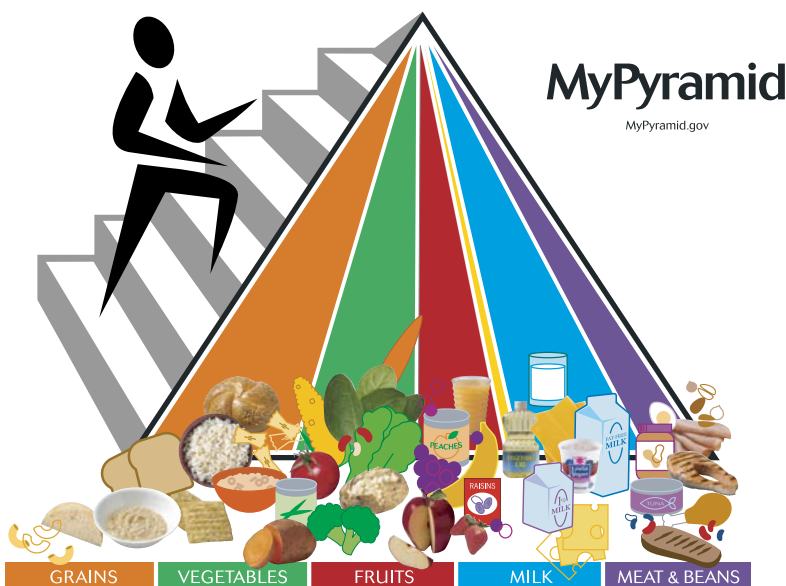
## Q: Can Diet Make a Difference?

A 1997 study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* showed that a **diet rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods, with reduced saturated and total fat, can substantially lower blood pressure.**

- This diet was as effective as some medications at lowering blood pressure in patients with mild hypertension. *If you're taking medication, don't stop, but ask your physician if you should try the DASH diet.*
- The diet may prevent or delay the need for medication in patients with borderline high blood pressure.
- A more recent study verified these results and also found that **people who follow the DASH diet and a low sodium diet have the greatest reduction in blood pressure.**

## Q: What does the DASH Diet consist of?

This diet is comprised of whole foods - fresh, frozen, canned, and dried - that taste good and are readily available in supermarkets. There is no need for supplements, special foods or fat substitutes. Let USDA's MyPyramid be your guide.



In addition, maintain a healthy weight. Use less salt and consume less alcohol. Consult your physician for specific advice on your sodium intake.