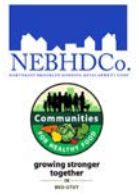




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Consuming natural foods, along with cutting out salt, will have you eating well and avoiding heart disease

High blood pressure, also known as "the silent killer," is an epidemic in our nation. It typically has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people don't realize they have it, which is why we must all get it checked regularly. Over time, unaddressed elevated blood pressure can have disastrous consequences including stroke, heart attack, blindness and kidney failure.

Every 39 seconds, someone in this country dies of cardiovascular disease. And despite the fact that the largest risk factor in these deaths — high blood pressure — is both preventable and reversible, as many as 67 million American adults live with high blood pressure, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alarming, 47 percent of those with a diagnosis have not gotten their blood pressure under control, according to government research. And many of those afflicted don't adhere to recommended medication regimens because of the drugs' side effects.

Medications are highly effective in bringing down blood pressure, when taken properly. But what you eat (and drink) also has a dramatic impact. The government-endorsed Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet has been proven as effective as prescription medication in reducing blood pressure.

DASH stands for "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension" and it is an eating plan that encourages you to eat a wide variety of whole foods and enjoy delicious flavors every day.

Studies show that DASH lowers high blood pressure and improves levels of blood lipids (fats in the bloodstream), which reduces the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Many imagine that a blood-pressure-lowering diet involves bland, unseasoned foods and deprivation. That couldn't be further from the truth. Although reducing your sodium intake is an important step in lowering blood pressure, *what you add to your diet is as important as what you **take out**.*

Get quality nutrition from healthy food sources

Aim to eat a diet that's rich in:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole-grain, high-fiber foods
- Fat-free and low-fat (1 percent) dairy products
- Beans
- Skinless poultry and lean meats
- Fish, especially fatty fish contain omega 3 fatty acids such as salmon, trout and herring (eat at least twice a week)

...And low in:

- Saturated and trans fats
- Sodium

...And limit:

- Added sugars



10 Foods your heart and blood pressure hate.....



You probably already knew junk food is bad for your waistline, but did you ever stop to think about what it's doing to your heart? In particular, watch out for foods high in saturated fat, sodium, and cholesterol—all of which can raise the risk of heart disease and heart attack, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). And while desserts can be dangerous, plenty of other common foods are proven to be detrimental to your heart health.

1. Fried chicken.

Fried food is a known cholesterol and fat powerhouse, but chicken sounds healthy. Four pieces of KFC's Original Recipe Chicken comes with 920 calories, 63g of fat, 350mg of cholesterol—and that's not including the fat-laden sides.

Eat this:

A grilled, skinless chicken breast is one of the most nutritional meats you can eat. At 120 calories, 1.5g of fat, and 70mg of cholesterol, a grilled chicken breast can make a tasty substitute for its fried, fat-loaded brethren.

2. Sausages.

A staple at tailgate parties and barbecues, sausages can wreak havoc on your arteries. The Johnsonville Original Bratwurst or Italian Sausages contain 22g fat (8g saturated fat), and 810mg of sodium per grilled link.

Eat this:

Try smoked turkey sausages. At only 110 calories, 6g of fat (1.5g saturated fat) turkey sausages—though not an everyday fare—are a better alternative.

3. Cheesecake.

Let the sweet toothed beware; most cheesecakes will run up your calorie and fat intake. An especially risky choice is the Cheesecake Factory's Godiva Chocolate Cheesecake, which packs a whopping 860 calories, 57g of fat, and 80g of carbohydrates per slice. The allure of this indulgence may be strong, but think twice before diving in.

Eat this:

If you have a hankering for cheesecake, opt for the plain variety. With 315 calories, 20g of fat, and 25g of carbohydrates, though it's not a healthy choice, the plain cheesecake is less detrimental to your heart than its chocolaty cousin.

4. Steak.

Yes, the steak. High amounts of saturated fat and cholesterol make red meat, particularly in large quantities, an unhealthy heart choice. A top sirloin cut of beef, raw, can run you 594 calories, 18.5g of fat (6.8g saturated fat), and 191mg of cholesterol. If you pan-fry it, you'll add even more calories, cholesterol, and grams of fat.

Eat this:

Choosing the right cut of beef can prevent a lot of wear and tear on your arteries. The pricey filet mignon will cost you only 6.7g of fat (2.5g saturated fat), and 67mg of cholesterol. Filet mignon out of your price range? A T-bone steak is less-expensive healthy choice for your red meat cravings.



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5. Burgers.

Choosing the wrong burger can have big repercussions for your heart. McDonald's famous Big Mac contains 540 calories, 29g of fat, and 1040mg of sodium. Even if you make your hamburgers at home, a three-ounce hamburger made with 80 percent-lean beef still has 14.8g of fat (5.6g saturated fat), and 76mg of cholesterol.



Eat this:

The best alternative for ground beef is ground turkey breast. It clocks in at an amazing 120 calories, 1g of fat (0g saturated), and 28g of protein per four-ounce burger. Add ground pepper, a pinch of cayenne, and a dash of salt to beef up your turkey burger

6. Pizza.

It's a convenient, Friday-night delivery essential, but pizza is no friend of your heart. A single plain slice has 9.8g of fat (4.4 saturated fat), and 551mg of sodium. But who just stops at one?

Eat this:

Pizza is an easy, do-it-yourself meal. Start with whole wheat dough, English muffins, or pitas, then add sauce and reduced fat cheese to create a flavorful, healthy alternative your whole family can help make.

7. Pasta.

It's an Italian classic: spaghetti and meatballs. Mom's recipe may include a secret ingredient, but the dish served at Romano's Macaroni Grill has some eye-popping extras: 1,430 calories, 81g of fat and 41g of saturated fat, and 4540mg of sodium.

Eat this:

If you have pasta on the brain, try the whole wheat variety. On average, this kind contains only 197 calories, 0.8g fat, and is a great source of fiber. A little marinara sauce won't put you in a nutritional bind. If you're in the mood for meatballs, go for ground turkey.

8. Ice cream.

It may evoke memories of your carefree childhood days, but ice cream is anything but innocent. Ben and Jerry's best-selling flavor, Cherry Garcia, packs 14g of fat (10g saturated), and 22g of sugar for every ½ cup (approximately two scoops).

Eat this:

The obvious alternative to ice cream is frozen yogurt. The frozen yogurt version of Cherry Garcia contains half the calories and only 3g of fat (2g saturated).

9. Doughnuts.

It's probably no surprise that these breakfast blunders made the list of worst heart foods. However, few people know how terrible can be. Just one Krispy Kreme Creme Filled Chocolate Doughnut is a doozy: 20g of fat (5 saturated), 23g of sugar, and 38g of carbohydrates. It'll take you an hour to walk off the damage.

Eat this:

Reach for instant oatmeal, which has been proven to lower the bad LDL cholesterol and boost your metabolism. Add some fresh berries for an excellent start to your day.



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10. Chips.

First, consider that the average 1-ounce bag of plain, salted potato chips contains 155 calories, 10.6g of fat (3.1g saturated fat), and 149mg of sodium. Then multiply those numbers by 112: that's the number of 1-ounce bags that the average American eats in a year. It's the equivalent of seven pounds of potato chips annually.

Eat this:

A great choice instead of potato chips and the fattening dips that go along with it are the dynamic duo of pita and hummus. One pita has under 100 calories and less than one gram of fat. Hummus is an excellent, low-fat, low-cholesterol choice for a dip. And it tastes great.

Foods that will keep you're your high blood pressure normal and keep your heart healthy

Berries!

Just one serving of blueberries a week can help cut your risk of high blood pressure. Blueberries, as well as raspberries and strawberries, contain natural compounds called anthocyanins that protect against hypertension.

Fiber-Filled Oat Bran

Oatmeal is a great breakfast choice if you have high blood pressure, but oat bran can provide even more health benefits, since it's higher in fiber, which helps to lower blood pressure and improves digestive health. This low-sodium food can be prepared as a hot cereal and topped with fruit or used in pancakes. You can also add oat bran to many baked goods, such as muffins or bread.

Potatoes

Everyone loves a baked potato, right? But did you know that a baked potato is high in potassium and magnesium; two important minerals that can help fight high blood pressure? Research shows that if Americans boosted their potassium intake, adult cases of high blood pressure could fall by more than 10 percent. As for magnesium, many older Americans fail to get enough in their diet, according to the National Institutes of Health. So why not kill two birds with one food. In addition to baked potatoes, here are some other foods high in both these minerals: halibut, spinach, bananas, soybeans, kidney beans and plain nonfat yogurt.

Beets

Drinking a glass of beet juice can lower blood pressure within just a few hours, according to a Queen Mary University of London study published last year in the American Heart Association journal *Hypertension*. The nitrate in the juice has the same effect as taking a nitrate tablet, the researchers found. Beet juice can be found at some health food stores and specialty groceries such as Whole Foods. Other nitrate-rich foods include spinach, lettuce, cabbage, carrots and, of course, whole beets.



Got (skim) milk?

Eating low-fat dairy products can reduce a woman's risk of developing hypertension. That's the conclusion of a 2008 study of nearly 30,000 women with an average age of 54. The women who ate the most low-fat dairy products — yogurt, low-fat cottage cheese, frozen yogurt, skim or low-fat milk — were 11 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure.

Chocolate



Chocolate lovers rejoice! Eating a one-ounce square of dark chocolate daily can help lower blood pressure, especially in people who already have hypertension, according to Harvard researchers who analyzed 24 chocolate studies. Dark chocolate is high in flavonoids, natural compounds that cause dilation of the blood vessels. Look for chocolates that say they contain 50 to 70 percent cacao, such as Ghirardelli 60 percent cacao dark chocolate squares.

Salt-Free Seasonings

Many of the spice blends available at the grocery store can add flavor to your dishes, but they are not usually low-sodium foods. Instead of using a premade mixture, make your own seasoning to help lower blood pressure by tossing together spoonfuls of fresh or dried herbs and spices, which usually contain no salt. *For example, to flavor a healthy dish of whole-wheat pasta, mix up an Italian blend of dried rosemary, oregano, and thyme.*

Sweet and Savory Cinnamon

Run to your pantry, grab your jar of this sweet spice, and start sprinkling — studies have shown that it may help to lower blood pressure. You can sprinkle it on oatmeal, stir it into stews and chili, and in stick form, use it to flavor coffee and hot cocoa.

Fresh Fish for Protein

Fish is a great source of lean protein, and some varieties such as trout are rich in vitamin D, which has been shown to help lower blood pressure. “People usually don’t get enough vitamin D from food, so this is one way to boost your intake,” Dean says. A fresh fish fillet needs only minimal preparation. Keep it a low-sodium food by brushing on a little olive oil, sprinkling it with cracked black pepper, and baking or grilling it for a few minutes — it’s easy and flavorful.

Iron-Rich Spinach

Spinach and other leafy greens are low-sodium foods and a great way to up your intake of vegetables, an important part of a diet to lower high blood pressure. Greens are also a fairly good source of calcium — half a cup of cooked spinach provides 12 percent of an adult’s recommended daily calcium intake. Use spinach in salads or add cut-up spinach leaves to pasta, casseroles, and other dishes. Spinach is also packed with dietary fiber, iron, and vitamins A and C, making it an essential food in any diet.



RESOURCES TO LOOK INTO:

American Heart Association
www.heart.org

D.A.S.H. Diet
www.dashdiet.org



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TODAY'S RECIPES

Spinach Berry Salad

- 1 pound fresh spinach
- 1 cup of fresh berries
- 1 small red onion
- ¼ cup pecans, toasted (optional)
- 4 oz goat cheese

In a large salad bowl, toss together the spinach, strawberries, blueberries, onion and pecans. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the dressing ingredients; shake well. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Balsamic Vinaigrette

- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a small bowl, combine the vinegar, mustard, and garlic. Add the oil in a slow steady stream, whisking constantly. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Swiss Chard with Garbanzo Beans and Fresh Tomatoes

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 can chickpeas
- 2-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 10-12 ounces chard, rinsed and sliced into ribbons (you can use the stems too, sliced thinly)
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 3-5 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- pepper, to taste

Combine the quinoa with 2 cups of water or stock. Bring to a simmer and cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until tender. Meanwhile, in a skillet put the olive oil and sliced up walking onions and the drained garbanzo beans. Saute until they start turning golden brown then add the garlic and sauté until everything starts turning a nice caramel color. Add the chard and 1/4 cup water and cover. Cook for about 3-5 minutes or until chard is tender but still bright green. When the chard is done, add the quinoa, seasonings, cumin and stir together. Heat for additional 2-3 minutes.



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Chocolate Bark with Pistachios & Dried Cherries

- 3/4 cup roasted, shelled pistachios, (3 ounces), coarsely chopped
 - 3/4 cup dried cherries, or dried cranberries
 - 1 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest
 - 24 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped, divided
1. Line the bottom and sides of a baking sheet with parchment paper. Toss pistachios with cherries in a medium bowl. Divide the mixture in half; stir orange zest into 1 portion.
 2. Melt 18 ounces chocolate in a double boiler over hot water. (Alternatively, microwave on low in 30-second bursts.) Stir often with a rubber spatula so it melts evenly.
 3. Remove the top pan and wipe dry (or remove the bowl from the microwave). Stir in the remaining 6 ounces chocolate, in 2 additions, until thoroughly melted and smooth.
 4. Add the pistachio mixture containing the orange zest to the chocolate; stir to mix well. Working quickly, scrape the chocolate onto the prepared pan, spreading it to an even 1/4-inch thickness with a rubber spatula. Sprinkle the remaining pistachio mixture on top; gently press it into the chocolate with your fingertips. Refrigerate, uncovered, just until set, about 20 minutes.
 5. Invert the pan onto a large cutting board. Remove the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Using the tip of a sharp knife, score the chocolate lengthwise with 6 parallel lines. Break bark along the score lines. Break the strips of bark into 2- to 3-inch chunks.