

# Implementing a Low Sodium DASH Diet: Practical Tips for Counseling Patients

**CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:** Sarah McAleer, MEd, RD, LD; Kate Gawlik, DNP, APRN-CNP; Eileen Seeholzer, MD, MS; and Shireen Khoury, MD, MPH on behalf of Team Best Practices

## How can we help patients adopt a low sodium DASH diet to improve blood pressure control?

Following the low sodium version of the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet can reduce systolic blood pressure in hypertensive patients by about 11 mmHg<sup>1</sup>; potentially enough to avoid an additional blood pressure (BP) medication.

The DASH eating pattern emphasizes consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and heart healthy fats, which differs from the typical American diet that tends to be higher in processed, sugary, and high sodium foods. Therefore, helping patients understand, start, and stick with a lower sodium intake on the DASH diet can be challenging.

Cardi-OH has developed a “plate” graphic to assist in counseling patients on the DASH diet. Consider these practical tips when counseling patients:

### Make smart swaps

Exchange frequently-consumed processed foods for healthier, accessible options. A referral to a registered dietitian may help.

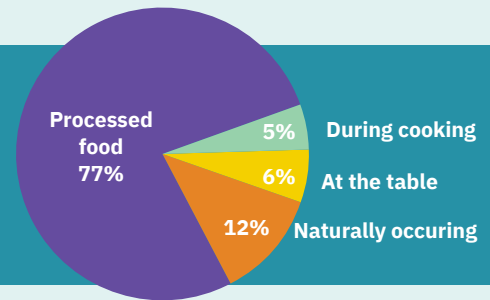
TRADE THIS...	...FOR THIS
sodas, juices, sweet tea, sports drinks	water, unsweetened seltzer, unsweetened tea, low-fat milk
sugary cereal, breakfast pastries	whole-grain oatmeal, unsweetened yogurt or plain Greek yogurt with fresh berries
white rice, pasta	lentils, black beans, quinoa, “riced” sweet potato, cauliflower, cabbage
bacon, sausage, deli meat	grilled fish, eggs, tofu, hummus
chips, packaged snacks	baby carrots, ¼ cup low sodium almonds, walnuts, sliced cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes
salt, salty seasonings	herbs, lemon, pepper, salt-free spice mixes

\* BP reduction of 5.3 mmHg – 20.8 mmHg, with greater reductions seen at higher baseline BPs.

### CITATIONS

- Juraschek S.P., Miller E.R., 3rd, Weaver C.M., Appel L.J. Effects of sodium reduction and the DASH diet in relation to baseline blood pressure. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2017;70(23):2841–2848
- DASH Eating Plan [Internet]. National Institutes of Health. National Institutes of Health; [cited 2020Mar16]. Available from: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan>

### Typical Sources of Dietary Sodium in the American Diet



Track your daily sodium intake and do not exceed 1,500 mg or about 3/4 of a teaspoon of salt.

### Read labels

- Remember that sodium is found in beverages, too, including sports drinks and sodas
- Look at serving sizes; consuming two servings means twice the amount of sodium listed on the label
- Choose foods with **5% or less** of the Daily Value of sodium per serving
- Foods labeled “reduced” sodium or “light” sodium can be misleading; they are often still high in salt

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 100mg	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>

### Look for foods labeled:

**low sodium:**  
less than 140 mg sodium per serving

**sodium free:**  
less than 5 mg sodium per serving

**no salt added**

Prepare most meals at home in order to have greater control of sodium intake.

Additional information on dietary recommendations to improve cardiovascular health is available at [cardi-oh.org/best-practices/lifestyle](http://cardi-oh.org/best-practices/lifestyle). Follow @cardi\_OH on Twitter for additional cardiovascular health content.

The Ohio Cardiovascular Health Collaborative is funded by the Ohio Department of Medicaid and administered by the Ohio Colleges of Medicine Government Resource Center. The views expressed in this document are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of the state of Ohio or federal Medicaid programs.