


Get Active With DASH




Combining the DASH eating plan and physical activity can lower high blood pressure and make your heart healthier.



Making physical activity part of your daily life while following the DASH eating plan multiplies the health benefits. Being active can lower high blood pressure, improve cholesterol and blood glucose levels, protect your heart, improve blood flow, and help you manage stress. The good news is there are many ways to make moving more part of your life gradually.

Types of physical activity

The four main types of physical activity are aerobic, muscle-strengthening, bone-strengthening, and stretching.

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- **Aerobic.** Also called endurance activity, aerobic activity benefits your heart and lungs the most. Brisk walking, running, bicycling, jumping rope, and swimming are all examples.
 - **Muscle-strengthening.** Resistance training and weight lifting improve your power and endurance. You can also use elastic bands or body weight for resistance, like doing push-ups.
 - **Bone-strengthening.** Weight-bearing activities such as running, walking, jumping rope, and lifting weights, make your bones strong.
 - **Stretching.** Stretching improves your flexibility and your ability to fully move your joints making all other activity possible. Touching your toes, side stretches, and yoga are some examples.
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How much activity is needed?

Adults should get at least 2½ hours of physical activity a week to help lower and control blood pressure. That's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. If you don't have high blood pressure, being physically active can help keep it that way.

Increase activity to multiply the benefits

If you have high blood pressure, the benefits of physical activity are actually greater than in those with normal blood pressure. Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities are beneficial. Moderate-intensity activity for about 90 minutes a week or 45 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity helps to substantially lower your risk of heart disease. If you have high blood pressure, work with your doctor as you increase your physical activity, as adjustments to medication may be needed.

Everyone can benefit by being active

If you don't have high blood pressure but still aren't active, you can benefit from increasing your physical activity to recommended levels. Physical activity can help lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of becoming overweight or obese or developing diabetes.

Tips to Make Moving More Part of Your Life Every Day

Getting started

If you're inactive, start slow. For example, start with a short walk each day. Gradually build up and set new goals to stay motivated. The important thing is to find something you enjoy, and do it safely. And remember—trying too hard at first can lead to injury and cause you to give up. If you have a chronic health problem, be sure to talk with your doctor before beginning a new physical activity program.

1 Set a schedule.

Physical activity can help improve your mood and your overall well-being. Planning time for exercise helps make it part of a routine.

2 Build activities into your day.

Go for a walk during a break from work or do strength training while watching TV. Think about transforming your everyday activities so you move more.

3 Move for a short time a few times a day.

Don't have a full half hour? Move for few minutes at a time. Walk briskly for 5 minutes, turn around and walk back. Dance (standing or seated) to three songs. Do some squats. Break up sitting time. Even light-intensity activity is beneficial for your health.

4 Get a friend or family member to join you.

Go on walks or take a yoga or other fitness class together. Motivate each other to keep it up. Share your goals and celebrate your accomplishments together.

5 Do what you love.

Love the outdoors? Try gardening, hiking, biking, or golf. Play with the children in your life. Walk on a track at a nearby school or dance to music that lifts your spirits.

Learn more about the benefits of physical activity and living a heart-healthy life at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-healthy-living.