

Q. What foods can I eat to help control my blood pressure?

A. If your blood pressure is higher than 120/80, you're not alone. About 1 in 3 adults in the United States have

high blood pressure. It's a condition that can lead to heart problems, kidney damage, vision loss, stroke and other health problems.

Fortunately, a healthy weight, regular exercise, and medication (if necessary) can help. What you eat matters, too. Foods that are high in potassium and low in sodium can make a difference. These foods can help control blood pressure:

Fruits and vegetables

Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in potassium and low in sodium. It's one reason the DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) recommends eating 8 to 10 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables a day, like:

Vegetables: Broccoli, beet greens, carrots, collards, green beans, kale, lima beans, lentils, peas, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes. Fresh or frozen is best. If you do eat canned vegetables, read the food label. Many canned vegetables are high in sodium.

What foods will help



my blood pressure?

Fruits: Apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, dates, grapes, and mangoes are potassium-rich fruits. Melons, peaches, raisins, strawberries, oranges, grapefruit, pineapple, and tangerines are good options too. Fresh or frozen is best. Try these fruits as a snack. Eat your favorite fruit with yogurt, cereal, or whole-grain toast for breakfast. Or make a fruit salad.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds can also be a good source of potassium that can help control blood pressure. But don't overdo it. Nuts contain healthy fats, but can also be high in calories. A small handful (1.5 ounce

ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

serving) a day is enough. Choose unsalted nuts and seeds such as: pumpkin seeds, almonds, filberts, pistachios, and sunflower seeds.

More foods in the DASH Diet to help lower blood pressure include:

Whole grains. Eat foods high in fiber like oatmeal, whole-grain breads and cereals, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice.

Healthy fats and oils. Instead of vegetable oil or butter, try olive oil, canola oil, and trans-fat-free margarine.

Low-saturated fat foods.

Try fish, skinless poultry, tofu, legumes, and "veggie meats."

If you need to lower your blood pressure, take a closer look at your diet. Eating more fruits and vegetables is a good place to start. Your diet and lifestyle habits can help control blood pressure, lower your risk for heart problems, and improve your overall health.

Sources:

American Heart Association.

National Institutes of Health.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

