



Western Sydney Nutrition & Dietetics Newsletter

DASH-ing to Better Heart Health

High blood pressure is dangerous. In 2007-2008, 1.9 million Australians had reported hypertensive disease (either self-reported, or having been reported on their behalf)²; this number is more than all Australians with diabetes mellitus (0.8million) AND heart, stroke and vascular diseases (1 million) combined² (for 2007-2008).

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet has been shown to reduce both blood pressure and blood lipids. The diet focuses on plenty of fruits and vegetables, low fat dairy, lean meat, fish, poultry, nuts, beans and grains. It focuses on manipulating intake of the minerals sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium, as part of whole foods, to promote healthier clinical measures. The diet is also full of antioxidants, vitamins and fibre, moderate protein content and low in saturated fats and cholesterol¹.

Sodium: Ideally, less than 1500mg per day of sodium (the equivalent of 2/3 teaspoon of table salt), particularly for those who already suffer from hypertension, the elderly, or people with diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

Understanding the information which is provided on a nutrition information panel is vital when determining the salt content in foods. Especially when it is present in unsuspecting food items.

Potassium: Found naturally in fruits and vegetables, it is not recommended to use potassium based alternatives to table salt, especially for those who are on blood pressure medication.

The evidence suggests that these nutrients are protective against disease, so why not just 'pop a pill?' Scientific studies attempting to use supplements to control blood pressure have mostly failed¹. When nutrients are consumed as part of whole foods, the nutrient is mixed in with other food components, making the effect greater¹.

The great part about implementing this type of healthy eating plan for reducing hypertension is that results are quick, usually within 14 days of commencing the DASH diet¹.

The dietary management options offered at Western Sydney Nutrition and Dietetics involves creating a sustainable eating program,

tailored to individual requirements. The diet focuses on optimizing outcomes for general health as well as specific health concerns for the client; whilst maintaining nutritional adequacy.

Reference:

1. Heller M, 2007; The DASH Diet action plan; Based on the National Institutes of Health Research; Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, Deerfield, IL: Amidon Press
2. 1301.0 ABS Year Book Australia; Health status (online), available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1301.0~2012~Main%20Features~Health%20status~229> Last Accessed 12/9/12

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