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INTRODUCTION

The state of obesity in the world today is a concern for all governments especially those in developed countries. Despite the efforts these governments have taken, the epidemic seems to become more serious.

It affects both children as well as adults. The main reason for the growth of this epidemic is a lack of proper nutrition knowledge among the people. Most of the people have limited physical exercise as children spend a lot of time playing video and internet games or watching television.

People who become obese in their childhood may not be able to overcome it and take it into adulthood. The problem is more serious among minorities who have less access to quality medical care to help in treating the problem. Obesity has become more common as people adopt the conveniences of life and foods that add more health risks than benefits.

Obesity was in the older days confined to adults. However, this problem is now common among kids as well. Children are consuming a lot of food and engage in very little play. The problem of excessive weight has led to other diseases such as diabetes, increased blood pressure, and increase in cardiovascular disease risks among other problems.

It will soon be very common to find people in their 20s and 30s having heart attacks.

Although the obesity problem is more common in developed nations, developing countries are catching up fast. The main contribution to this is that the poor people are making efforts to live like their more affluent counterparts in the developed world.

They do this oblivious of the risks associated with comfort living. Efforts are being made especially in schools to ensure the diet being served to children is healthy. Schools serve their pupils food that has limited portion sizes. The quality of foods and drinks available in the school is being improved. Research has shown that many schools have started to serve healthier foods to the pupils.

The problem can be eliminated or reduced with the use of the DASH diet. This is a flexible and well balanced diet. The DASH plan has very low fat content and focuses on the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The food under the plan is rich in proteins and contains limited sugar, red meat and sweetened beverages.

Similar efforts should be adopted in other parts of the world so as to arrest the situation. If the trend continues, a lot of people will be affected by this problem. This will consequently lead to increased incidences of diabetes and other lifestyle diseases. An increase in the number of people requiring special medical care will put a strain on the medical resources available.

In response to the alarming trend, various government initiatives have been designed to sensitize people to eat healthier food and become active physically. Despite the efforts being made by the governments, it will take the concerted efforts of all the people individually to play a role in averting the obesity epidemic. Convenience foods should particularly be avoided as they have no nutritional value to the body. It is important to ensure you eat a well-balanced diet at all times.

CHAPTER 1 - WHAT IS THIS THING THE DASH DIET?

When it comes to finding out what exactly is the DASH Diet, there are a few essential aspects that need to be taken into consideration. As you may know, the foods that we eat affect our overall wellbeing. Therefore, a diet having harmful elements like cholesterol and saturated fats is an obvious way to hypertension and various other deadly diseases. However, consuming right foods can lower the risk of developing these serious health issues. There is a specific diet plan that is designed to lower high blood pressure or hypertension. This particular diet plan is referred to as the DASH Diet.

What is it all about?

The DASH Diet is recommended through the clinical studies carried out by the scientists of NHBL institute. After careful examination and through clinical testing, the

scientists reached the conclusion that a diet plan rich in magnesium, potassium, calcium, fiber, and protein can significantly lower down the high blood pressure. Furthermore, the study supported the fact that a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and low in fats can greatly reduce the risk of hypertension. Also, the diet takes minimum amount of time to show the desired results.

The DASH diet focuses on three main ingredients or nutrients like magnesium, potassium, and calcium.

These nutrients are known for reducing high blood pressure. As per a study report, a normal 2000 calorie diet has around 500 mg of magnesium, 1.2 gm of calcium, and 4.7 gm of potassium.

Using the DASH Diet

Using and following a DASH diet is fairly simple and straightforward, as it takes very less time in preparing the meals. Not only is the dieter required to avoid foods high in cholesterol, but also augment the use of vegetables, cereals, and fruits as much as possible. Considering the fact that foods you eat in DASH diet are

rich in fiber, it is strongly advised that you gradually enhance the utilization of fiber-rich food to avoid digestive problems and diarrhea. Moreover, you can also augment fiber intake by adding an extra serving of fruits and vegetables in your diet.

Grains, B vitamins, and minerals are all good sources of fiber. For instance, whole grains, bran, wheat breads, wheat germ, and low fat cereals are some of the other grain products that you can use to enhance your fiber consumption.

Make sure to look into the labels of packaged and processed foods to find out their ingredients. Choose foods low in cholesterol, saturated fats, sodium, chocolates, and others. If you are looking to eat meat, make sure to limit your intake to six ounces per day. Also, skim milk or low fat milk is also another source for proteins.

The DASH diet is becoming extremely popular among the health-conscious people, mainly because it does not need any special recipes and meals. There are no special restrictions in terms of calorie counting and preparations as long as you avoid foods high in cholesterol and

saturated fats. The DASH diet plan is a healthy eating plan that concentrates on three most essential minerals, which are considered to have a good effect on high blood pressure.

CHAPTER 2 – THE HISTORY OF THE DASH DIET

For the past few years, the number of individuals suffering from hypertension or high blood pressure has been increasing.

Researchers have identified that the number one factor which contributes to the development of the condition is unhealthy lifestyle, primarily, unhealthy diet. In order to manage and prevent hypertension, practicing a healthy diet is very essential.

The DASH diet is among the most established diets used for the management of hypertension. It has been formulated based on scientific evidences conducted by experts in the field of medicine. Many individuals are currently using the diet as recommended by their physicians to achieve regulated blood pressure levels.

But have you ever wondered about the Beginning and History of the DASH Diet? In order to fully understand how the diet works, you must know its beginning and history.

The Beginning And History Of The DASH Diet

The diet has been formulated due to the increase in the number of individuals suffering from hypertension based on statistical reviews. It is very important to prevent the increase in blood pressure since it is highly associated with the development of severe cardiovascular disorders which include heart failure, heart attack and many others. Since it has been established that diet contributes greatly in the development of hypertension, scientists have formulated the DASH diet to manage the condition.

"DASH" is an acronym for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. The researches regarding the diet have started in 1992 and were conducted in 5 of the most well-known research centres of the world. The main aim of the researches was to ascertain the effects of diet on hypertension. After understanding that diet primarily

affects blood pressure based on subjects' tests and trials, the DASH diet was conceptualized.

The researchers made use of three diets to identify the most appropriate diet. Two of the diets were experimental variables while the last diet is the control diet. The control diet consists of the normal diet common among majority of individuals.

The first experimental diet is the "fruits and vegetables diet" wherein the amount of fruits and vegetables has been increased with an increase in magnesium and potassium minerals.

The second experimental diet is of low-fat content, high fiber, high potassium, magnesium and calcium and high protein. The experiments were conducted among 459 participants from different areas of the world.

After experiments and analysis of data, the second experimental diet has been concluded as the most effective DASH diet.

The DASH diet currently being used consists of the following food groups:

- grains
- vegetables
- fruits
- meat, poultry, fish
- low-fat dairy products
- seeds
- oils
- sweets

These foods are to be taken by the hypertensive individual in regulated amounts to aid in lowering blood pressure.

More recent studies have also revealed that the DASH diet is also effective in lowering blood cholesterol levels, a contributing factor to cardiovascular disorders. It is also being studied to ascertain its effects on promoting weight loss and in preventing several forms of cancers.

DASH diet is one of the well-researched diets of all time. There is no reason for you to doubt about the meal program since it is organic, safe and healthy. It is not

only recommended to manage hypertension but also to prevent the condition.

CHAPTER 3 - IS THE DASH DIET ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE?

The DASH diet among other things, usually educate and coach those with hypertension on the best diet aimed at minimizing the adverse effects of high blood pressure. By following the DASH diet, it is possible that heart diseases, stroke, and kidney stones risk are reduced to manageable levels.

Benefits Of The DASH Diet

Many health researchers have proved that when a person who is suffering from the hypertension follows the guidelines under the DASH diet, he or she is able to control the blood pressure in the body. High blood pressure is one of the major causes of death among in the world. Moreover, high blood pressure also contributes to high incidences of diabetes, heart diseases, and osteoporosis.

These diseases are also difficult to cure as they are lifetime-illness. It is for this reason that the DASH diet advocates for preventive measures rather than treatment which may not be possible with some people due to high medication cost.

High cholesterol levels in the blood are often harmful to human health. This is because it contributes to the thickening of blood vessels thus putting human life at risk.

The DASH diet contains foods with fewer or no cholesterol at all. Foods like fruits, low-fat dairy products, and vegetables in the DASH diet is known to work well in minimizing the chances of hypertension in the long run. Several foods in the DASH diet have the capability of reducing the sodium levels in the body.

Many health experts suggest that under the normal circumstances, a healthy human body requires 2400 mg of sodium in a day. As compared to traditional foods, this level of sodium might go up to 3500 mg which is considered harmful especially in regulating the blood pressure.

High sodium levels contribute to the rise in the blood pressure thus resulting to hypertension and if it goes unattended, death may occur eventually.

Apart from solving the hypertension problems, the DASH diet contains a lot of fiber which goes in hand in aiding smooth digestion in the stomach. Effective digestion means that all the basic nutrients are absorbed to the body system which equally translates to effective energy levels in the body and thus, more fats are burned down.

When the accumulated fats are reduced, there are high chances that the person will reduce the overwhelming weight in the long run. Therefore, the DASH diet is the best as compared to the traditional diet.

Finally, patients who usually complain of inflammation of the body tissues especially the heart are beneficiaries of the DASH diet. DASH diet has low levels of cholesterol. High cholesterol thickens the blood vessels which eventually reduce their effectiveness as blood rich in oxygen may not reach other parts of the body. A patient with thickened blood vessels usually appear tired because of poor oxygen circulation in the body. It is for this

reason that DASH diet is specially recommended for those patients suffering from hypertension so as to prolong their lives.

CHAPTER 4 – INCORPORATING THE DASH DIET INTO YOUR LIFESTYLE

As we have covered what the DASH diet is and the major benefits, it is natural to want to start on the diet now. But, one of the questions you have to ask is: How to incorporate the DASH diet into your lifestyle?

Due to the fact that many foods you will eat at restaurants or that you purchase which are pre-packaged are higher in sodium, how can you incorporate the diet in to your day to day routine, while still enjoying some of your favorite foods, and visiting some of your favorite establishments to dine out with friends and family?

For starters, you are going to want to include more fruits and veggies in the diet each day. So, if possible go for dishes that contain fruits, or have greens in them, as they are highly advised foods to eat on the diet. It is also important to cut out foods that are high in saturated fats, cholesterol, and trans fats. Although this might not be ideal on the go, when you are at home, it is quite simple, by purchasing foods that are limited in these labels,

which tend to lead to hypertension and higher blood pressure levels.

Red meat is something that you should limit. So, one easy way to do this is to choose other lean proteins during the day. You can eat chicken, or other meat and fish, or you can incorporate protein shakes in the diet. You do not have to eliminate red meat, just limit it.

An easy solution for snacks, are nuts, as they are high in the healthy fats your body needs, and are easy to take around with you nearly anywhere. If you are hungry, and need a quick snack, they are readily accessible. It is also important to avoid processed foods. So, instead of white bread, whole grains are the choice to make.

If you are trying to find simple recipe ideas, and would like to incorporate the diet in to your lifestyle, there are thousands of ideas out there. You are simply limiting processed foods, sweets, and refined sugars, and going for all natural food options. With sodium, you are going to have more some days than others, and this is okay. The goal of the diet is to keep you close to the recommended average, for a period of time. And, with many food producers making low sodium options, you can easily stay

at the limit, or close to it, for each day of the week.

The DASH Diet is actually quite simple to follow, and is not going to require major changes to be made, in order for you to be able to fit it in to your lifestyle. You are basically limiting sodium intake, cutting refined and processed foods, and going with all natural choices (i.e. - eating the foods you should eat). It does not really limit what you can eat, only quantities, and gives you guidelines for making better choices, making it one of the easier diets to transition in to, and follow on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 5 – WHAT TO EAT AND WHAT TO AVOID

Knowing what to eat and what to avoid is paramount if you want to succeed with this diet plan, so in this chapter we will reveal the top foods to eat to lower your cholesterol and curb hypertension.

Foods To Eat On The DASH Diet

* Whole grain foods- Foods containing whole grains such as beads, and pasta. You should also include rice, cereals, and oatmeal, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, whole grain cereals in your diet. Whole grains are not only rich in fiber, but also provide energy to your body.

* **Vegetables and Fruits-**

You must include 6-8 servings of fruits and vegetables in your diet. Carrots, tomatoes, strawberries, sweet potatoes, broccoli, blueberries, oranges, prunes, apples, pears, pineapple, raisins, squash, sprouts, are rich in carbohydrates, fiber, protein, minerals and vitamins.

*** Dairy products-**

Yogurt, milk, cottage cheese, fat-free milk, margarine, fat-free yogurt, sour cream, and cheese contain lots of calcium, vitamins, and proteins. Low fat or fat free dairy products are very effective addition to DASH diet.

*** Nuts, Seeds and Beans-**

Kidney beans, sunflower seeds, almonds, and kidney beans are best sources of potassium, protein, and magnesium. They are also rich in phytochemicals and fiber and help in fighting cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

*** Meat, Poultry and Fish-**

Meat and fish, either raw or processed, are best sources of protein, vitamin B, iron and zinc. Prepare and cook it properly by taking the skin and fats before either broiling, roasting or frying.

*** Fats and Oils-**

Fat-Enriched foods also help body in absorbing essential vitamins from the food you eat, which helps in boosting your immune system. However, excessive fat should be avoided as it can increase risk of diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

*** Low-sodium snacks-**

You can include low sodium snacks in your diet.

*** Low-fat Sweets-**

Graham crackers, jellybeans, and light flavored cookies are best for consumption in DASH diet program. You can also include dark chocolate is also recommended as it contains minerals that help in lowering hypertension.

* It is also important to drink sufficient amounts of water (at least 8-10 glasses) every day when taking your DASH diet. Water helps in flushing out toxins and salts from the body resulting in reduced blood pressure.

Foods To Avoid

* White breads (made using refined flour)

* Canned foods (most of these canned goods have lots of sodium)

* Pasta

* Snacks, such as chips and some varieties of cheese

* Frozen fish/chicken sticks

* Frozen meat and dinners

* Pre baked and packed cookies

* Packaged cakes and cake mixes

* Processed meats such as viennas and pastrami, etc

* Meal mixes (boxed)

* Some breakfast cereals, especially the ones that are loaded with various types of preservatives and sugar

Foods that are high in cholesterol and fat, such as sweets, red meat, and few dairy products, should also be avoided in your DASH diet

CHAPTER 7 – A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DASH DIET

Unhealthy eating habits have played the most important role in deteriorating the health standards of a huge number of people and such a situation paved the way for the arrival of various diet plans.

The DASH diet can be described as one of the most effective plan that goes well with the requirements of the modern day living and it is an ideal option for people who suffer from hypertension. But it cannot be confined to people who suffer from hypertension alone and on the other hand, it is a diet for all types of diseases.

This diet plan does not advocate a rigorous dieting method for you and you only need to make some small changes in your diet menu. The DASH diet always encourages the dieter to eat less sodium (salt) and it advocates an increased consumption calcium, magnesium, and potassium to lower blood pressure. Here is a sample daily meal plan on the DASH diet:

Breakfast

1) Cooked oatmeal - 1.5 cups

2) Medium sized banana - 1

3) Raisins - 1/2 cup

4) Vegetable juice or V8 - 1/4 cup

5) Non-fat or low fat milk - 1 cup

6) Coffee - 1 cup

7) Sugar or honey - 2 teaspoons

Mid-morning snacks

1) Almonds - 1/2 cup

2) Grapes - 16 nos.

Lunch

1) Turkey sandwich - 2 ounces of sliced turkey, 4 tomato slices, 2 lettuce leaves and 1 tablespoon mayonnaise

2) Small carrots - 6 nos.

3) Small apple - 1

Mid-afternoon snack

1) Unsalted pretzels - 1/2 cup

2) Sliced cucumber - 1/2 cup

Dinner

1) Chicken breast (cooked) - 3 ounces

2) Steamed broccoli florets - 10

3) Margarine or butter - 1 teaspoon

4) Quinoa or cooked rice - 1/2 cup

5) Low-fat or non-fat milk - 1 cup

6) Melon cubes for desert - 1/2 cup

You should closely monitor your normal eating plan for a few days before following the DASH diet and it is always advisable to compare your normal diet plan with the recommended daily servings of the DASH eating plan as well.

Such a method of approach will prepare you well to adapt to the diet methods advocated in the DASH diet and you will be able to implement more healthy changes in a gradual manner.

During preparatory days, you can include an additional serving of vegetables or fruits to one meal a day and various methods like adding a bowl of strawberries with your breakfast or an apple with your lunch will serve the purpose in the best possible manner. If you have a habit of drinking sweetened beverages you will have to replace it with a glass of low-fat milk. Consuming salads or

condiments with the lowest saturated and trans fats will help your preparation to get adjusted with the Dash diet and you should replace candy or chips with fruit of nuts as well.

Various studies have shown that the benefits of DASH diet cannot be confined to addressing hypertension alone. Other benefits of this unique diet method include decreased risk of developing certain cancers, diabetes, and osteoporosis and your overall health will undergo tremendous transformation as well.

CHAPTER 7 – HOW DO I SHOP FOR GROCERIES ON THE DASH DIET?

If you are on the DASH Diet, one major component to consider is how to shop for groceries on the DASH Diet. You have to know what foods to buy, what to avoid, and what the best options are, to ensure you stay on track, and help reduce the high blood pressure, as well as lead a healthier lifestyle, which is the diet's main goal. There are some tips you can follow, when you do go shopping, to buy the right foods and dishes in the grocery store.

Stick with fresh –

If you are faced with a choice between fresh or canned (pre-packaged)... go with fresh. This not only goes for fruits and veggies, it also goes for the meats you buy. With canned fruits or veggies, there are several artificial ingredients, and they are packed in with salt. With pre-packaged chicken or other meats and proteins, this is also the case. So, when you have the option, choose fresh.

Canned –

If you do buy canned fruits, make sure they are canned in their own juice, or water. This is going to eliminate the high corn syrup and starches, and you know exactly what you are eating. It is okay to buy these, but you have to read the label, to know what you are getting.

Stock up with DASH staples –

You always want to have quick meal ideas or snack options, when you are on the DASH Diet. So, you have to keep the home stocked up with foods that are DASH friendly. From lean meats and proteins, to fresh fruits and veggies, nuts and legumes, low fat dairy and whole grains, are all foods you should have on hand, at all times. If you need herbs or seasoning, go with sodium free or light, and choose items like fresh salsas, which add a great taste, and are all natural. When you go grocery shopping, look for these DASH specific foods, so you always know you are going to have something to eat at home.

Shop the perimeter –

The perimeter of any grocery store, is usually where you will find fresh, organic, and all natural. When you start going in to the center aisles, there are certain foods that are DASH friendly, but you are also going to find the highly refined, processed, and sugary foods. So, if at all possible, shop from the outside in, and limit what you do choose, when you do go in to the inside aisles of your local grocery store.

You want to go as natural as possible, and you want to do this as often as possible. So, making a list before you go shopping, avoiding shopping when you are hungry, and making the list and sticking to it, are all essentials you have to remember, if you want to find the right foods on DASH. You can make great tasting meals, and there are several great food choices you can make when shopping, you just have to be conscientious as you are shopping for them.

CHAPTER 8 - DANG! HOW DO I EAT AT RESTAURANTS ON THE DASH DIET?

Dining out with family or friends is part of our daily lives; for this reason, many people who are considering the DASH Diet will want to know how to eat at restaurants on the DASH diet.

It is tough, but it is not impossible to do. If you know what to avoid, and what you should look for (as a substitute), you can dine out, enjoy great meals, and still consume less than the allotted sodium intake for the day, if you know what to choose when you do dine out.

Cut out salt –

This is the basis of the diet, so it has to be done. When you order a meal, you can ask for it to be prepared without MSG or ingredients that contain salt. You also have to look out for certain meal preparation methods. Dark sauces, pickled, or cured, are all ingredients to look

out for - so ask for them on the side. If you have the option to choose a side, go for veggies or fruit dishes, rather than salty appetizers, which you don't know what half the ingredients are that you are consuming.

Reduce unhealthy fats –

When dining out, ask for foods to be prepared with olive oil, rather than canola or butter based cooking. Instead of salad dressing, you can go with a basic oil and vinegar sauce you drizzle on your salad. If there is visible fat on the meat or protein you order, trim it off. Choose dishes that are prepared in a healthy manner; look for words like broiled, poached, baked, and others. Go with steamed vegetables if you have a choice; and, ask for things to be prepared in a certain manner. You are paying for it, you have the right to request it when you order your meal.

Pay attention to all courses –

Some think it's just the entree, but this is not the case. You have to be careful with appetizers, drinks, and other foods you might order. Water, club soda, diet sodas, or

coffee and tea are great choices when ordering a beverage; if you do consume alcohol, you have to limit intake. You can have sides, but make the right choices. Go with steamed or fresh options, rather than the precooked appetizers. You can also order dessert; try to find a fresh fruit dish, or something like a sorbet, which is going to have much healthier ramifications, and is going to offer a much better choice than the chocolate cake will.

It is possible to dine out when you are on DASH, but you do have to make sure you know what you are ordering, and you have to plan in advance when you are dining out. You can ask for substitutions, ask for meals to be prepared in a certain way, and ask for healthier side dishes, in order to ensure you are getting the right food sources, avoiding high sodium, and staying on track, with the healthy lifestyle change you are making with this diet.

CONCLUSION – START TODAY

As we conclude this guide we must remember that the DASH diet is a consumption plan designed to lower cholesterol and stop hypertension.

If you are a person that suffers from hypertension then this is the diet for you. By changing your eating habits according to this diet, you will lower your sodium intake, which will then cause your blood pressure to be reduced. You will see a difference within two weeks and your blood pressure can drop by as much as 14 points after only a short period of time.

So as we begin the diet, let us give you tips to start the DASH diet today! There really is no reason to wait for months to start improving your health. This diet can help to prevent a number of illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, stroke and even heart disease.

REDUCE YOUR SODIUM INTAKE –

Reduce your sodium (salt) intake. A normal diet allows 2300mg of sodium per day and you need to only be consuming 1500mg per day.

WHAT TO EAT –

You can have certain fats and sweets, but they need to be limited. Your diet needs to consist of mainly whole grains (6-8 servings per day), vegetables (4-5 servings per day), fruits (4-5 servings per day) and low-fat dairy products (2-3 servings per day) to be effective. Lean meat, poultry and fish need to be limited to a maximum of 6 servings per day. Nuts, legumes and seeds should be limited to 4-5 servings per week, and then there is fat and oils, which are allowed, but should be limited to 2 servings per day. If you are wondering about the sweet stuff, then wonder no more! You are allowed sweets in the DASH diet, but you need to limit them to not more than 5 servings per week.

HOW MUCH IS A SINGLE SERVING?

Here are some examples of serving sizes to get you going

on the road to better health.

GRAINS - One slice of bread, 1/2 cup of cooked pasta, cereal and rice, or 1 ounce of dry cereal.

VEGETABLES - One cup of leafy green veggies or 1/2 cup of cooked or raw veggies.

FRUIT - One medium fruit, 1/2 cup of canned, fresh or frozen fruit.

DAIRY - One cup of yogurt, 1 cup of skim/1% milk or 1/2 ounces of cheese.

LEAN MEAT, FISH & POULTRY - One egg, 1 ounce of cooked lean meat or 1 ounce of canned tuna in water.

NUTS, SEEDS AND LEGUMES - 1/3 cup of nuts, 1/2 cup of cooked peas or beans, or 2 tablespoons of seeds.

FATS AND OILS - Two tablespoons of dressing, 1

teaspoon of margarine (soft) or 1 tablespoon of low-fat mayo.

SWEETS - One cup of lemonade, 1/2 cup of sorbet or 1 tablespoon of jelly, sugar or jam.

Try to avoid most processed foods, alcohol and caffeine where possible, but give yourself the odd treat now and then. Good luck and enjoy!