

# Bread of Life

## Health one-pager: Eating right to lower blood pressure

In our previous sessions we discussed the harms of too much salt, too much sugar and dangers of certain types of fats. This session looks more closely at one of the dangers of too much salt - high blood pressure (also known as hypertension). We will also look at foods that help prevent and control hypertension and the benefits of eating foods on the Daniel-type diet. Many of the foods permitted in this eating pattern are wholesome and nutritious. In addition, we will look at specific foods that reduce blood pressure and some that are appropriate for persons who have type 2 diabetes mellitus.

## High blood pressure overview

High Blood Pressure is called the silent killer, since there are usually no symptoms or side effects  
Overall, 1 out of 3 Jamaican adults have high blood pressure

- 675,000 Jamaicans have high blood pressure
- 585,000 Jamaicans have high blood pressure that is not controlled
- 6/10 men with high blood pressure do not know that they have it.
- Left untreated the results could be deadly, therefore the name the **Silent Killer**

Persons with uncontrolled blood pressure are more likely to have strokes, heart attacks and kidney failure. To find out if you have high blood pressure all adults should be tested:

1. Everyone should check their blood pressure at least once a year
2. If you have high blood pressure, check it once a month

If your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher, talk to your healthcare provider about treatment.

To prevent complications (e.g. heart disease, stroke) from occurring persons with high blood pressure need to:

- Ensure they take their medication daily as prescribed by their doctor
- Eating a low sodium diet (see below)
- Get daily physical activity (at least 30 minutes per day)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Maintain a low (or no) alcohol intake
- Quit smoking

One of the main ways, persons can control their blood pressure is to eat the right foods. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) is a way of eating that promotes a healthy lifestyle. The DASH diet promotes foods that are very similar to the Daniel fast promoted in Daniel chapter 1. The Daniel Fast is an eating pattern derived from the foods described by four Israelites in exile in Babylon who refused for a period to eat refined foods but rather chose to eat unprocessed foods that were culturally appropriate to their religion/way of life. From the brief list given in the Hebrew Bible, nutritionists have created a list of modern foods that aligns with the principles espoused by the group in Daniel.

Foods on DASH or Daniel Diet which represent a healthy diet that help can lower blood pressure:

#### DANIEL DIET FOODS<sup>1</sup> AND DASH DIET EATING PATTERNS<sup>2</sup>

Beans and lentils.

Nuts and seeds: almond, walnuts, peanuts.

Whole grains: cereal, rice, oatmeal.

Olive oil, coconut oil.

Fruits and vegetables: bananas, sour sop, green leafy vegetables (eg. callaloo).

### Foods that help lower blood pressure

- a. Garlic relaxes blood vessels so the heart has to work less to pump blood through them and thus lowers blood pressure.

- b. Bananas, avocado pear and sweet potatoes are all high in potassium. Potassium reduces the effects of sodium/salt on blood vessels by reducing tension in the walls and lowering blood pressure.
- c. Dark chocolate which is high in cocoa (at least 70%) also reduces blood pressure in those with hypertension.
- d. Watermelon contains an amino acid called citrulline, which may help to manage high blood pressure.
- e. Oats contain a substance called beta-glucan which may reduce blood pressure.

### Foods to avoid if you have high blood pressure

- a. Caffeine
- b. Alcohol

#### ACTIVITY ONE

## Getting ready for Daniel eating pattern/fast

Foods on DASH or Daniel Diet which represent a healthy diet that help can lower blood pressure:



How to do the Daniel Fast

#### Consider the following questions:

How likely are you to engage in this type of fast for seven days?

1. **YES**, I have already done this for **MORE** than seven days.
2. **YES**, I have already done this, but for **LESS** than seven days.
3. **NO**, but I intend to do this in the next 30 days.
4. **NO**, but I intend to do this in the next 6 months.
5. **NO**, and I do **NOT** intend to in the next 6 months.

How likely are you to engage in this type of fast for 21 days?

1. **YES**, I have already done this for **AT LEAST** 21 days.
2. **YES**, I have already done this, but for **LESS** than 21 days.
3. **NO**, but I intend to do this in the next 30 days.
4. **NO**, but I intend to do this in the next 6 months.
5. **NO**, and I do **NOT** intend to in the next 6 months.

#### ACTIVITY TWO

## Learn how to measure your blood pressure

Watch this video on how to correctly measure blood pressure and practice on yourself or a relative.



Eating Behaviour  
Laboratory

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/daniel-diet#food-lists>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/ss/slideshow-hypertension-low-bp-foods>