



Health Matters

DASH Diet: A Heart-Healthy Approach

One way to support heart health is through balanced nutrition. **The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is a heart-healthy eating plan designed to lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.**

Benefits of the DASH Diet

Lowers blood pressure, reduces the risk of heart disease, improves cholesterol levels, promotes weight loss, and may help prevent type 2 diabetes. Getting enough lean protein, fruits and veggies, whole grains, and hydration also can support our mood and energy levels for improved quality of life.

Sample DASH Diet Meal Plan

Breakfast: Oatmeal with berries and nuts, low-fat yogurt with fruit

Lunch: Salad with grilled chicken, beans, and vegetables

Dinner: Baked salmon with roasted vegetables & brown rice

Snacks: Fruits, nuts, low-fat milk

Along with balanced nutrition, regular physical movement, social connection, stress management, and avoiding risky habits like smoking and excessive drinking also support heart health. Island County residents have slightly higher rates of hypertension and hospitalizations for coronary artery disease when compared to Washington state, which is similar for other rural communities where access to care can be a challenge. Learn more about chronic diseases in



Key Principles of the DASH Diet

- ✓ Focus on fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Choose whole grains
- ✓ Lean protein sources
- ✓ Low-fat dairy
- ✓ Limit saturated and trans fats
- ✓ Limit sodium

our community [here](#). Keeping up with regular screenings, including annual physicals, can help catch hypertension early.

Learn more about the DASH Diet with these resources:

[Mayo Clinic: DASH Diet Overview](#)

[Mayo Clinic: DASH Diet Sample Menus](#)

[Healthline: Benefits of the DASH Diet](#)

[NIH: The Science Behind the DASH Eating Plan](#)

U.S. DEPT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Salt, Blood Pressure, & Your Health

The best-known effect of sodium on health is the relationship between sodium and blood pressure, according to Dr. Holly Nicastro, a National Institute of Health nutrition research expert. Dozens of studies, in both animals and people, have linked a higher salt intake with higher blood pressure. Reducing salt intake, on the other hand, lowers blood pressure. High blood pressure has been linked to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and other health problems.

There are two blood pressure numbers, written with one above or before the other:

- Systolic, the first, is the pressure when the heart beats, pumping blood through the arteries.
- Diastolic is the pressure when the heart is at rest between beats.
- The [ideal blood pressure](#) reading is between 90-120 systolic and 60-80 diastolic.

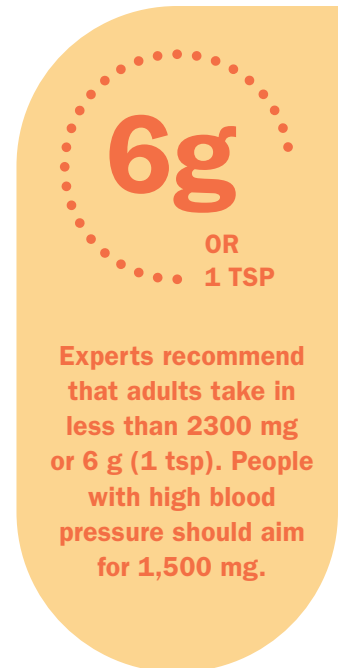


Reducing Salt

A very modest decrease in the amount of salt, can have dramatic health benefits according to experts. The salt we add to our food accounts for about 10% of our salt consumption. Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods, restaurants, and fast food.

Making Changes

Even small salt reductions can affect your blood pressure. If you can't find a low-salt alternative to a particular food, it still helps to pick something that's lower than what you're already consuming.



Learn about drinking water for your health, well-being

Water is essential for our health and well-being. Most Island County residents get their water from groundwater.

Island County Environmental Health Specialist Tracy Hall invites you to check out the Island County Drinking Water and Hydrogeology webpages, containing up-to-date information.



Drinking Water Resource

This resource provides comprehensive information for all types of water systems, including troubleshooting tips, disinfection guidance, water quality data, and well protection resources. It also offers step-by-step tools like ICGeoMap, links to helpful documents, and an easy subscription to the quarterly Drinking Water Newsletter.



Hydrogeology Resource

This updated resource includes a simplified Hydrogeology Map and dashboards with accessible information on wells, aquifer recharge areas, water systems, and seawater intrusion risk. It also offers guidance for well owners, groundwater monitoring details, PFAS information, and links to reports, publications, and data submission forms.

Fun Facts:



- Around **72% of Island County** residents get their drinking water from groundwater.
- There are nearly **10,000** drinking water wells in Island County.
- Island County's groundwater is replenished by rain.
- There have been several studies about groundwater in Island County. Check out [Island County Groundwater Publications!](#)



To protect groundwater resources:

- ✓ Conserve water
- ✓ Properly dispose of unwanted chemicals
- ✓ Safely store potential pollutants (including fertilizers and gas) at least 100 feet away from all wells
- ✓ If you have a well, test the water for bacteria and nitrates yearly
- ✓ If you have a septic system, have it regularly inspected and maintained

Flu and Older Adults

Each year, millions of people suffer from seasonal influenza, often called the flu. The flu is a respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs.

You are more at risk of flu and its complications if you:

- Have certain medical conditions such as asthma, [diabetes](#), or chronic kidney disease.
- Have [heart disease](#) or have had a [stroke](#).
- Live in a nursing home or other long-term care facility.

Learn more about [people at increased risk for flu and its complications](#), and find flu facts from the Washington State Department of Health [here](#).

How does the flu spread?

The flu is contagious, which means it spreads from person to person. It mostly spreads through droplets in the air when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. It can spread from up to six feet away.

It's possible to spread the flu before you feel sick and when you have symptoms. Typically, people with the flu can spread it a day before, and up to a week after feeling sick. People with weakened immune systems may be able to spread the flu for even longer. If you or someone you know is sick with the flu, [take steps to help prevent spreading the disease](#).

How can you prevent the flu?

Getting a flu vaccine every year can help prevent the flu. The vaccine is safe, effective, and available for little to no cost to you.

In addition to getting your flu vaccine, you can help stop the spread of flu by:

- Washing your hands
- Covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth

- Staying home when you are sick
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- [Cleaning and disinfecting](#) frequently touched surfaces at home, work, or school

Recognizing a fever in older adults

Average normal body temperatures in older adults are slightly lower than in younger adults. So, when an older adult is sick, their fever temperatures may also be lower. According to the CDC, the following temperatures in older adults may be signs of an infection, such as COVID-19 or the flu:

- A single temperature reading higher than 100°F
- Multiple temperature readings above 99°F
- A rise in temperature greater than 2°F (1.1°C) above the person's normal body temperature

Where to get a flu vaccine?

You can get your flu vaccine at a doctor's office. Many grocery stores, drug stores, and pharmacies also offer flu vaccines. Visit [Vaccines.gov](#) to find a location near you. [Current local pharmacy information can be found on the Island County website.](#)

Why do you need a flu vaccine every year?

You need a flu vaccine every year for two reasons. First, flu viruses change, and the flu vaccine is updated each year to target the flu viruses that are anticipated to spread that year. Second, the protection you get from a flu vaccine lessens with time, especially in older adults.

What are the side effects of flu vaccines?

[The flu vaccine is safe](#) and cannot give you the flu. Most people have no problems after getting a flu vaccine.



Reasons the flu is more dangerous for older adults:

- The immune system, which helps your body fight infections, weakens as we age. Because your body is busy fighting off the flu, you might pick up a [secondary infection](#) such as pneumonia.
- A second reason is that older adults are also more likely to have other health conditions, like diabetes, that increase risk for complications from the flu.



The flu can be very serious and even life-threatening in older adults 65+. It can infect lung tissue and cause secondary pneumonia.

[Click here to learn the difference between a cold, the flu, and Covid 19.](#)

When side effects occur, they are generally mild and go away on their own. The most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the site where you got the shot. Some people also get a headache, fever, nausea, or muscle aches.

Let's Beat Colorectal Cancer Together

March was Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colorectal Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men and women combined. **It's important to start screenings at 45 for early detection and prevention.**

Here's the bottom line:

Colorectal cancer has a 91% survival rate when found early. Regular colorectal cancer screening can find and remove lesions before they become cancer. Talk to your doctor about different screening options here: [Cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org)

If 80% of the eligible population stayed up to date with screening, more than 277,000 colorectal cases and 203,000 deaths could be prevented.

Screening for Colorectal Cancer

It's recommended that all adults between the ages 45-75 should be screened for colorectal cancer. If you're older than 75, talk to your healthcare provider about getting screened. Several different screening tests can be

used to find polyps or colorectal cancer, including:

Stool Tests

These tests screen for colon cancer by checking your stool for hidden blood or abnormal DNA. You collect a sample at home and send it to a lab for analysis.

Colonoscopy

Doctors use a lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, healthcare professionals can find and remove most polyps and cancers.

CT Colonoscopy

Computed Tomography (CT) colonoscopy, also called a virtual colonoscopy, uses X-rays and computers to produce images of the entire colon.

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy (Flex Sig)

The health care provider puts a short, thin, flexible tube into your rectum and checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon.



Colorectal Cancer Facts:

72%

In 2022, 72% of Island County residents ages 50-75 years old reported that they had been screened for colorectal cancer.

Cancer screening is for people without symptoms.

When colorectal cancer is found at an early stage before it has spread, the five-year relative survival rate is

90%

Check out Island County Public Health's NEW Social Media Pages



Talk to your healthcare provider on what screening options are right for you.

For more information: [cdc.gov/colorectal-cancer](https://www.cdc.gov/colorectal-cancer).

Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer:

- Someone could have colorectal cancer and not know it. People do not always have symptoms, especially in early stages.
- Changes in your bowel habits.
- Blood in or on your stool (bowel movement).
- Abdominal pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away.
- Unexplained weight loss.

