

Shake It Off

How the NFL's most celebrated quarterback called an audible on his salty diet and defeated high blood pressure



Joe Montana will be the first to tell you that he has never been a healthy eater.

"You could describe my typical meal as fried, and on the side," says the 50-year-old Hall of Famer. "And man, did I love the saltshaker."

During his 16 years in the NFL (mostly with the 49ers, then Kansas City), Montana often started his day with bacon, eggs, and hash browns. For dinner, he tore into steaks. But that seemed fine because Joe Cool was chiseled by the kind of training that comes with being the league's premier arm. When he retired from football in 1994, however, he stopped exercising. And in 2001, his unhealthy habits caught up with him. "My blood pressure was 140/90," says Montana. "In one year, it went from normal [under 120/80] to high."

"His risk of heart disease also doubled," says cardiologist James Rippe, who works with Montana on BP Success Zone, a blood-pressure awareness campaign. It was time to start making lifestyle adjustments.

The first—and hardest—thing Montana did was cut back on salt. Most Americans consume upwards of 5,000 mg per day—more than twice the government's recommendation—and Montana was no exception. By taking the shaker off the table and limiting his intake of salty snacks and processed foods, he probably knocked five points off his reading, says Dr. Rippe. He dropped another few points by eating more fruits, vegetables, and dairy products (studies suggest that the potassium, magnesium, and calcium in these foods can reduce hypertension). He also started exercising 30 minutes a day. Thanks to these changes and a medication called Lotrel, Montana's blood pressure is now below 120/80. "And I have a helluva lot more energy," he says. **TREVOR THIEME**

joe's plan

Here's a look at what Montana might eat in a typical day

BREAKFAST

- 8:00 A.M.
 • oatmeal with skim milk
 • 6 to 10 almonds
 • ½ cup raisins
 • 1 cup cranberry juice

SNACK

- 10:00 A.M.
 • 15 baby carrots with hummus

LUNCH

- 12:30 P.M.
 • chili made with extra-lean ground turkey
 • 1 pear
 • 1 glass of iced tea

SNACK

- 3:00 P.M.
 • 1 cup low-fat chocolate yogurt

DINNER

- 6:30 P.M.
 • 6 oz. lean steak or grilled fish
 • baked potato skins
 • 1 cup broccoli
 • 1 glass of seltzer

DESSERT

- 7:30 P.M.
 • 1½ cups strawberries with a drizzle of chocolate sauce



BEST LIFE ONLINE Go to BestLifeOnline.com/highbloodpressure for BP reduction tips.