

Eating for a Healthy Heart

We all know what *not* to eat for a healthy heart. Avoid potato chips, cookies, fatty meats and butter. But what should we eat to make our diet more heart-healthy? Research is exploring foods that can prevent or even reverse the damage of heart disease. Read on to learn about the latest foods, supplements and eating patterns that may provide health benefits.

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR HEART DISEASE?

There are many factors for heart disease. Some risk factors can be changed, while others cannot. In general, the more risk factors you have, the greater your risk of developing heart disease.

Cannot Control	Lifestyle-Related
Age (45 years or older for men, 55 years or older for women)	High LDL-cholesterol
Family History	Low HDL-cholesterol
	Smoking
	Diabetes
	High Blood Pressure
	Overweight/Obesity
	Physical Inactivity
	Stress

HEART HEALTHY EATING PLAN

Following a heart healthy eating plan can help keep your blood cholesterol low and help you achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, which may help to prevent heart disease. Individuals who are at high risk for heart disease should follow stricter guidelines.

- **Limit saturated fat and trans fat to no more than 8 – 10 percent of total daily calories.** Both saturated fat and trans fat increase LDL “bad” cholesterol levels. Foods high in saturated fat include fatty meats and poultry, high-fat dairy products, butter, tropical oils and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (found in margarine, high-fat baked goods). The best way to limit artery-clogging fat, is to choose plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods.
- **Limit total fat to no more than 30% of total daily calories.** Selecting “good” fats in place of saturated fats may help lower LDL “bad” cholesterol and slightly raise HDL “good” cholesterol. Heart-healthy fats include vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, avocados and olives. Keep in mind that high fat foods also tend to be high in calories which may lead to weight gain increasing your risk for heart disease.
- **Keep dietary cholesterol intake to no more than 300 milligrams a day.** Foods high in cholesterol can also raise blood cholesterol. Dietary cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin (eggs, meats, and dairy foods) or foods that are made with animal products (baked goods, French fries cooked in lard).

- **Limit sodium intake to 2400 milligrams a day.** To limit your sodium intake, choose foods that are minimally processed like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean meats. Add flavor to favorite foods and dishes with herbs and spices in place of salt.
- **Choose just enough calories to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.** Most women need about 1600 calories, whereas most men, active women and children should eat about 2200 calories daily. Active men and teenage boys need about 2800 calories daily.

Heart Smart Tips

Eating for a healthy heart goes beyond watching the amount of fat and cholesterol in your diet. Current research suggests many other factors in our diet may play an important role in heart health. Here are some additional steps you can take which may help prevent heart disease. Keep in mind that no food or supplement is a magic bullet. Research only recently has been focusing on the preventive power of foods. There is still not enough scientific evidence to prove that these foods or compounds can prevent heart disease. Incorporating these foods into a low-fat meal plan, along with adequate exercise will help promote a healthy heart.

- **Fill-up on fiber.** Dietary fiber, particularly soluble fiber, is good for the heart. It is recommended that you get between 25-35 grams of total fiber a day from whole grains, fruits and vegetables a day. At least 10 of those fiber grams should be supplied by soluble fiber. Rich food sources of soluble fiber include oatmeal, barley, beans, apples, pears and cabbage.
- **Enjoy more soy.** Research shows that adding 25 grams of soy protein a day to a diet that is low in saturated fat can help lower cholesterol levels by 7-10%. Soybeans are good sources of protein, fiber, omega-3 fatty acids and phytoestrogens. All of these compounds have a potential positive impact on heart health. Drinking soy milk, snacking on soy nuts and using soy meat substitutes are just a few ways to increase the soy in your diet.
- **Eat beans at least 3 times a week.** In addition to being an excellent source of soluble fiber, beans are also a good source of folic acid. Studies show that folic acid can decrease homocysteine levels, an amino acid associated with heart disease risk. Studies show that 400 micrograms (mcg) of folate each day can decrease homocysteine to safe levels. Other good sources of folic acid are citrus fruits, orange juice, dark leafy greens and fortified cereals.
- **Eat fish at least twice a week.** Fish is low in saturated fat and some types of fish, like salmon, sardines and trout, are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. Three recent studies all showed that omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils protect people from irregular heart beats and sudden cardiac events (heart attacks). New dietary reference intakes for omega-3 fatty acids are set between 1.1-1.6 grams a day for adults.
- **Eat more plant sources of omega-3 fats.** Other sources of omega-3 fats include fats and oils (canola, soybean, and walnut oils), wheat germ, flaxseed, walnuts, and soybeans. Flaxseed must be used in the ground form to get the omega-3 benefits. Other heart health benefits of flaxseed are its high soluble fiber and low saturated fat content.
- **Eat nuts.** Studies show that eating 1-2 ounces of nuts high in polyunsaturated fats a day, like almonds and walnuts, can help lower cholesterol levels. But watch out - nuts are high in calories. A one-ounce serving (one small handful) of almonds or walnuts provides about 180 calories.

- **Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.** Five servings of fruits and vegetables a day is the minimum number of servings you should eat, but research has shown higher amounts can help lower blood pressure and protect your heart. Fruits and vegetables are low in fat and high in fiber. They are also good sources of antioxidants, that help protect our cells from damage.

If you have high cholesterol, you may also want to consider adding a margarine that contains stanol or sterol esters, like Benecol and Take Control. Two to three tablespoons a day has been shown to lower cholesterol by 15% in people who have high cholesterol. Be sure to talk to your health care provider to see if this product is a good choice for you.

Recipes for a Healthy Heart

Thirty-Minute Minestrone

6 cups water	$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon dried basil, crushed
2 cups baby peeled carrots, halved	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
15-oz. can Great Northern beans, drained & rinsed	1 teaspoon minced garlic
14-oz. can tomatoes, diced, no salt added	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup chopped onion	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup elbow macaroni, uncooked
1 tablespoon vegetable bouillon (lower sodium)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
3 cups packed kale, washed and sliced	
9-oz. packaged frozen Italian green beans	

1. In a large saucepan, add water, bouillon, carrots, beans, tomatoes, onion, garlic, basil oregano and pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Add green beans, kale and pasta. Return to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until pasta is done. Spoon into bowls and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Makes 8 servings. *Per serving: 178 calories, 3 gm fat, 11 gm protein, 29 gm carbohydrates, 6 gm fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 2.6 mg iron, 153 mg calcium, 319 mg sodium.*

Adapted from American Heart Association Quick & Easy Cookbook.

Flaxseed Raisin Muffins (1 tablespoon ground flaxseed per muffin)

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unbleached flour	2 eggs
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup ground flaxseed	2 tablespoon canola oil
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened applesauce
1 tsp. baking soda	1 cup nonfat buttermilk
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup golden raisins
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon nutmeg	
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt	

Preheat oven to 375°. Spray 12-cup muffin tin with cooking spray or line with paper cups. In a large bowl, blend first seven ingredients together, set aside. In separate bowl, mix together eggs, oil, applesauce, buttermilk and raisins. Add to dry ingredients. Mixing until combined. Spoon

batter into muffin tins. Bake 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool muffins in tin for 5 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack.

Makes 12 muffins. *Per muffin: 231 calories, 9 gm fat, 34 gm carbohydrates, 6 gm protein, 6 gm dietary fiber, 197 mg sodium.*

From: The American Institute for Cancer Research, Summer 2002 newsletter

Super Soy Snack Mix

3 cups corn nuts (usually found near the peanuts, or purchased in bulk at local health food stores)

2 cups (8 oz) roasted soy nuts (look near the produce section in most large grocery stores)

1 cup sunflower seeds

1 cup pumpkin seeds (found with snack foods or in health food sections of large grocery stores)

Mix nuts and seeds together in a large bowl. Store in an airtight container.

Makes about 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup servings. *Per $\frac{1}{4}$ cup serving: 113 calories, 5 gm protein, 11 gm carbohydrate, 6 gm fat, 2 gm fiber, 15 mg calcium, 1 mg iron, 91 mg sodium.*

Recipes for a Healthy Heart

Salmon Burger

1 large (14.75 ounce) can salmon, skin removed	1 ½ teaspoons freshly grated ginger
1 medium potato, baked or boiled, peeled	2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tablespoons soy sauce (lower sodium variety)	½ teaspoon cracked black pepper

Mash salmon and potato, mix in soy sauce, ginger and garlic. Form into 4 patties. Sprinkle with cracked pepper. Spray with olive oil or canola oil spray and grill on each side about 4 minutes. Serve with Asian sauce (1 Tbsp soy sauce with 2 tsp horseradish or wasabi) & shredded cabbage.

Makes 4 servings. *Per serving: 180 calories, 6 gm fat, 23 gm protein, 7 gm carbohydrate, 0 gm fiber, 40 mg cholesterol, 1 mg iron, 264 mg calcium, 777 mg sodium*

Tasty Salmon or Tuna Patties

2 cups soft bread crumbs	dash pepper
1/3 cup fresh or frozen chopped onions	1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
2 cups flaked tuna or salmon	1 whole egg plus 1 egg white
1 tablespoon lemon juice	½ teaspoon dill
1 teaspoon onion powder	1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1. Drain tuna, flake. Combine all ingredients except oil, shape into 6 patties.
2. Spray nonstick skillet with nonstick spray, add oil. Heat on medium and cook patties until golden brown. Turn patties at least once.

Makes 6 servings. *Per serving: 145 calorie, 16 gm protein, 9 gm carbohydrate, 1 gm fiber, 4 gm fat, 57 mg cholesterol, 27 mg calcium, 1 mg iron, 280 mg sodium.*

Cucumber Dill Sauce Mix together 1 cup plain nonfat yogurt, 1 TB. lemon juice, 1 tsp. dill, 1 tsp. Dijon mustard, 1/4 cup finely chopped cucumber, 1/4 cup finely chopped green onion.

Spicy Lentil Soup

1 tablespoon olive oil	1 cup lentils, washed
2 stalks celery, chopped	4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
¼ teaspoon cinnamon	1/2 cup grated carrots
¼ teaspoon ground cloves	2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped
1 large onion, chopped	1 teaspoon lemon juice, optional
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped	ground black pepper and salt to taste
½ - 1 teaspoon ground cumin	

1. Heat oil in a large, heavy saucepan. Cook onions and celery until onions are translucent.
2. Reduce heat and add garlic, cinnamon, cumin and cloves. Cook for 1 minute.
3. Add lentils and broth. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes or until lentils are soft.

4. Add tomatoes, carrots and lemon juice. Cook another 20 minutes until carrots are tender.
Add additional broth to thin if desired. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper.

Makes 6 servings. *Per serving: 160 calories, 3 gm fat, 10 gm protein, 24 gm carbohydrate, 11 gm fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 3.3 mg iron, 35 mg calcium, 400 mg sodium.*

From *Magic Spices* by Donna Weihoffen, RD 1998.

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