

Eat Better for Heart Health

CARDIOVASCULAR



Eating a heart-healthy diet improves your chances of feeling good and staying healthy—for life! Healthy foods are the fuel our bodies use to make new cells and create the energy to thrive and fight disease.

Poor eating habits can contribute to the development of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. The good news is that with some simple planning and easy-to-follow guidelines, you can enjoy a heart-healthy diet.

The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a wide variety of nutritious foods daily from each of the basic food groups. Choose foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry and fish, nuts and legumes, nontropical vegetable oils (such as canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, or sunflower).¹



What to Do

- **Track what you eat, or use an online food tracker.**
- **Eat fresh vegetables and fruits.**
These are high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber—and low in calories. Eating a variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and your blood pressure.
- **Eat unrefined fiber-rich foods.**
A diet rich in fiber can help promote weight loss because fiber keeps you feeling fuller longer and helps lower your blood cholesterol.
- **Eat lean meats.**
If you choose to eat meat, choose lean cuts, prepare poultry and fish without skin, and cook without adding saturated or trans fats.
- **Eat fish at least twice a week.**
Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish like salmon or trout) help improve heart disease risk factors and bolster brain function.



What to Avoid

- **Saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol.**
Avoid foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.
- **Sugary foods and drinks.**
Cut back on sugar-sweetened beverages and foods, including soft drinks, candy, cookies, desserts, and refined grains.
- **Sodium intake.**
Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day.
- **Excessive alcohol consumption.**
If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation. Moderate alcohol intake means one drink per day for women, or two drinks per day for men.
- **Tobacco products.**
Do not consume tobacco or nicotine products in any form (including smoking, chewing, or vaping).

References

1. American Heart Association. 2018. The American Heart Association's Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations. Retrieved from <http://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/aha-diet-and-lifestyle-recommendations>. Accessed February 2019.

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