

Nutrition for Heart Health (low sodium, high fiber)

Heart disease affects millions of people and is America's leading cause of death. The good news however, is that following a heart healthy diet can reduce your risk for both developing and dying from heart disease by helping you maintain a healthy weight, improve your cholesterol levels and control high blood pressure. Here are some dietary strategies to help you follow a heart healthy diet:

- Follow a DASH style eating plan - The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) style eating plan helps to prevent and control high blood pressure, which can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke. Following a DASH style eating plan means consuming a diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables. The DASH style eating plan also emphasizes whole grains, lean meats and fish, nuts and seeds, and dairy. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, and calcium, as well as protein and fiber and low in total and saturated fat and cholesterol..
- Reduce your sodium intake -The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends a daily sodium intake of less than 2,300 milligrams. Those who are 51 and older, African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should aim for a daily sodium intake of no more than 1500 milligrams. To lower your sodium intake limit the amount of sodium that you add to food on your plate and when cooking and instead add flavor to foods by using herbs and spices. Also when buying processed and prepared foods, make sure to read the food label and look for “reduced sodium” or “no salt added” products.
- Choose your fats wisely - Limit saturated fat intake to less than 10% of your total calorie intake and eat as few trans-fats as possible. Instead choose healthy fats including mono and polyunsaturated sources. Try using olive or canola oil in place of butter, lard, shortening and stick margarine. Also choose lean meats (beef loin and round cuts, boneless skinless chicken breast, turkey cutlets, pork loin, etc.) and eat more seafood, especially the higher fat varieties like salmon and tuna which are rich in heart healthy omega 3 fatty acids. Choose low-fat or fat free dairy products which have the same nutrients as the full fat varieties minus the fat. If you choose high fat dairy products, be sure to limit fat elsewhere in your diet. To reduce trans-fats, check food labels for trans-fats and limit your intake of foods with ‘partially hydrogenated’ vegetable oils as one of the main ingredients.
- Fiber up - Fiber, especially soluble fiber, may help to lower cholesterol by binding to fatty substances in the body and helping to eliminate them. To increase your intake of fiber rich foods, eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.

Please consult a registered dietitian or qualified health professional for further recommendations.

This medical and/or nutritional information is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.