

## Heart Disease: Nutrition Guidelines for Prevention

### Heart Healthy Dietary Guidelines -- you should eat:

- 8-10% of the day's total calories from [saturated fat](#).
- 30 percent or less of the day's total calories from [fat](#).
- Less than 300 milligrams of dietary [cholesterol](#) a day.
- Limit [sodium](#) intake to 2400 milligrams a day.
- Just enough [calories](#) to achieve or maintain a healthy weight and reduce your blood cholesterol level. (Ask your doctor or registered dietitian what is a reasonable calorie level for you.)

**Caloric intake and physical activity:** Balance caloric intake and physical activity to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight. These suggestions can help:

- Prepare and eat small portions of food
- Read labels to understand how many calories you eat each day
- Exercise 30-60 minutes/day, if possible
- Build physical activity into your day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator and parking farther away from a building, which forces you to take some extra steps

**Benefit:** The proper balance of caloric intake and physical activity may help keep you from becoming overweight or help you lose weight; overweight is associated with increased risk of heart disease.

### Fruits and vegetables

Consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Follow these tips:

- Select brightly colored fruits and vegetables to get the most nutrients
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables each day
- Prepare fruits and vegetables without added fat and sugar, if possible
- Enjoy fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables to help meet your fruit and vegetable intake

**Benefit:** Fruits and vegetables are loaded with nutrients, and are low in fat, sodium, sugar, and calories.

### Whole-grain, high-fiber foods

Enjoy whole-grain, high-fiber foods, such as:

- Whole-wheat breads
- Bran cereals
- Popcorn
- Oatmeal
- Rye
- Barley
- Corn
- Brown rice
- Wild rice
- Buckwheat
- Bulgur
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Sorghum

**Benefit:** Whole grains are loaded with nutrients and are associated with a decreased risk of heart disease.

### **Fish**

Consume fish, especially oily fish, at least twice each week. Follow this advice:

- Select oily fish when possible, such as:
  - Salmon
  - Tuna
  - Mackerel
  - Herring
  - Sardines
  - Trout
- Choose other types of fish as part of a healthy diet

**Benefit:** Fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which may decrease your risk of heart disease and sudden death from heart disease.

### **Saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol**

Limit your intake of saturated fat to <8-10% of calories, *trans* fat to <1% of calories, and cholesterol to <300 milligrams (mg)/day. These suggestions will help:

- Choose lean meats and vegetable alternatives to meat, such as dried beans
- Select fat-free, skim, or 1% milk, and low-fat dairy cheese and yogurt

- Minimize intake of fats such as margarine and other partially hydrogenated fats
- Use liquid oils over solid fats when cooking or baking, whenever possible
- Cut back on pastries and bakery products, such as muffins and doughnuts

**Benefit:** Diets low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart disease.

### **Added sugar**

Eat and drink fewer beverages and foods with added sugars. These tips may help:

- Limit beverages high in added sugars, such as soda, fruit punch, and sweetened coffees and teas
- Reduce the number of foods you eat that have added sugar, such as cakes, cookies, pies, and candies

**Benefit:** By eating fewer foods and beverages with added sugar, you may help prevent unwanted weight gain; weight gain might increase your risk for heart disease.

### **Salt**

Choose and prepare foods with little or no added salt. Follow these suggestions:

- Choose reduced-sodium versions of foods
- Use less salt in cooking and for seasoning foods
- Limit high-sodium condiments (soy sauce, ketchup, etc)

**Benefit:** Consuming foods with little or no added salt may help prevent high blood pressure.

### **Alcohol**

If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation. Follow this advice:

- Choose one drink/day for women and two drinks/day for men or less
- Do not drink if you:
  - Can not limit your alcohol intake
  - Are to avoid alcohol because of health problems
  - Are to avoid alcohol because of the medications you are taking

**Benefit:** Alcohol intake is associated with reduced heart risk for those who choose to drink and can drink responsibly.

### **Other dietary factors**

These additional dietary factors might affect your risk of heart disease:

- **Fish oil supplements that contain omega-3 fatty acids:**
  - Use food sources of omega-3 fatty acids, rather than supplements, to prevent heart disease
- **Antioxidant supplements:**
  - Not proven to provide benefits to reduce heart disease risk
  - Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, and whole grains to obtain antioxidants, instead of taking supplements
- **Folate and other B vitamins:**
  - Folate and other B vitamin supplements are not noted to reduce cardiovascular disease risk
- **Soy protein:**
  - Little evidence exists to prove that soy protein improves heart health
  - Consumption of soy foods may *indirectly reduce heart disease risk* by replacing foods high in fat and cholesterol, such as high-fat meats and dairy foods

### [Recipes](#)

If you need further assistance with these recommendations, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian (R.D.) who can help you with additional nutrition education, cooking suggestions, shopping tips, menu planning, and individualizing a diet to meet your lifestyle needs.

References on file