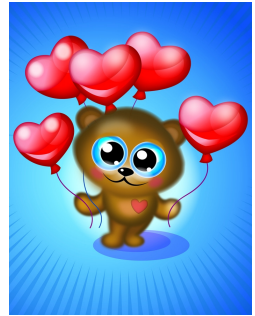


Heart-Healthy Diet

Since February is Valentine's month, we thought we should talk about the heart.

Feeding your heart well is a powerful way to reduce or even eliminate some risk factors for heart disease. Adopting a heart-healthy nutrition strategy can help reduce total and LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol), lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, and reduce body weight. While most dietary plans just tell you what you CAN'T eat (usually your favorite foods!), the most powerful nutrition strategy helps you focus on what you CAN eat. In fact, heart disease research has shown that adding heart-healthy foods is just as important as cutting back on others.



Here are nine nutrition strategies to reduce your risk of heart disease:

1. **Eat more fish.** Fish is a good source of protein and other nutrients. It also contains omega-3 fatty acids, which may help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.
2. **Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes.** These beautiful and delicious wonders of nature may be one of the most powerful strategies in fighting heart disease.
3. **Choose fat calories wisely.**
4. **Limit total fat grams.**
5. **Eat a bare minimum of saturated fats and trans fats.** (for example, fats found in butter, margarine, salad dressing, fried foods, snack foods, sweets, and desserts).
6. **When you use added fat, use fats high in monounsaturated fats.** (for example, fats found in olive and peanut oil).
7. **Eat a variety -- and just the right amount -- of protein-rich foods.** Commonly eaten protein foods (meat, dairy products) are among the main culprits in increasing heart disease risk. Reduce this nutritional risk factor by balancing animal, fish, and vegetable sources of protein.
8. **Limit cholesterol consumption.** Dietary cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol levels, especially in high-risk people. Limiting dietary cholesterol has an added bonus: You'll also cut out saturated fat, as cholesterol and saturated fat are usually found in the same foods. Get energy by eating complex carbohydrates (whole-wheat pasta, sweet potatoes, whole-grain breads) and limit simple carbohydrates (regular soft drinks, sugar, sweets). If you have high cholesterol, these simple carbohydrates exacerbate the condition and may increase your risk for heart disease.
9. **Feed your body regularly.** Skipping meals often leads to overeating. Eating five to six mini-meals is the best way to control blood sugars, burn fat calories more efficiently, and regulate cholesterol levels.

Other Heart-Healthy Strategies

- **Reduce salt intake.** This will help you control your blood pressure.
- **Exercise.** The human body was meant to be active. Exercise strengthens the heart muscle, improves blood flow, reduces high blood pressure, raises HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol), and helps control blood sugars and body weight.
- **Hydrate.** Water is vital to life. Be sure to stay adequately hydrated.
- **Enjoy every bite.** Your motto should be dietary enhancement, not deprivation. When you enjoy what you eat, you feel more positive about life, which helps you feel better. An added bonus is that you eat less when you eat food you love, and that helps control weight and reduce cholesterol levels.

How Much Is a Serving in a Heart-Healthy Diet?

When you're trying to follow an eating plan that's good for your heart, it may help to know how much of a certain kind of food is considered a "serving." The following table offers some examples.

SERVING SIZES

Food/amount	Serving/exchange	The size of
1 cup cooked rice or pasta	2 starch	tennis ball
1 slice bread	1 starch	compact disc case
1 cup raw vegetables or fruit	1 fruit or vegetable	baseball
1/2 cup cooked vegetables or fruit	1 fruit or vegetable	fist
1 ounce cheese	1 high-fat protein	pair of dice
1 teaspoon olive oil	1 fat**	half dollar
3 ounces cooked meat	3 protein	deck of cards or cassette tape
3 ounces tofu	1 protein	deck of cards or cassette tape

** Remember to count fat servings that may be added to food while cooking, such as oil, butter and shortening.