Heart Health—Proteins and Fats in Your Diet

February Is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in this country. You can lower your chances of getting heart disease by choosing foods carefully and becoming more physically active.

How Do You Eat for a Healthy Heart?

When it comes to selecting heart-healthy foods, that means reading labels and selecting foods that have fewer calories, contain less fat, include more fiber, and are lower in sodium.

♥ Eat Fewer Calories

Whenever you eat more calories than you need, you gain weight and being overweight can lead to heart disease. The reverse of that is that when you eat fewer calories than your body needs, you are able to lose weight and be healthier.

♥ Eat Less Fat

There are several types of fat and some are more likely to cause heart disease. The ones to watch out for are saturated fats and trans fats. These fats are usually found in foods that come from animals, such as meat, milk, cheese, and butter. They are also found in foods made with tropical oils (palm and coconut). Be sure to watch for fats/oils listed on food labels and eat less.

Here’s an example: If you haven’t done so already, make the switch to low-fat or fat-free milk. It has all the vitamins and minerals as whole milk but less fat and cholesterol. But also remember that children ages 1-2 years old should drink whole milk.

♥ Eat More Fiber

Fruits, vegetables, and grains contain fiber and may help lower your chances of getting heart disease.

So, eat more fruits and veggies! Your goal should be to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Enjoy your favorites but also try something new!

Eat more whole-grain foods such as brown rice, oatmeal, whole-wheat bread and high-fiber cereals. When you read the ingredients list and you see a whole grain as the first item listed—go for it!

♥ Eat Less Sodium

Eating less sodium can help lower some people’s blood pressure, and this can help reduce the risk of heart disease.

You do need some sodium in your diet but most people eat too much. Most of the sodium is hidden in ready-prepared mixes from food manufacturers and some of the sodium comes from the salt that you add at the table—but it all adds up!

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-866-762-2237 or visit www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess.

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Move More

Make it a point to be as physically active as you can. You don’t have to join an expensive gym or buy fancy equipment—just move! You can walk around your neighborhood or the mall. Don’t hunt for the closest space; park further away from the store and walk. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Try to be physically active at least 30 minutes a day, or if you are trying to lose weight make that 60 minutes or more. It doesn’t have to be done all at one time; you can break that down into smaller segments.

How to Read Food Labels

On the package you will see a Nutrition Facts label:

Reading this can help you eat less fat and sodium, reduce calorie intake and increase fiber. Look for the words “total fat,” “saturated fat,” “cholesterol,” and “sodium.”

Also look at the “daily value” listed next to each of these words. If the amount is 5% or less for each of these items, then the food is low in these nutrients. That is a good sign that this food fits into a heart-healthy diet and may help reduce your chances of getting heart disease.

Bean Facts—Did You Know?

- Beans are heart-healthy foods.
- They are a great source of protein and iron.
- Beans are low in fat and are a great substitute for meat.
- They are high in fiber and may help lower your cholesterol.
- They are a good source of several B vitamins.
- Beans contain more iron that milk or eggs.
- They are economical, too! One-half cup of beans costs less than two e¢

Nine Bean Soup Mix

2 cups dried assorted bean mix
2 quarts water
1 pound diced meat: ham, beef, or chicken (optional)
1 large onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
½ teaspoon salt
1 can (28 oz.) crushed tomatoes
1 can (4 oz.) green chilies, chopped (optional)

Sort and wash beans. Place in six-quart pot. Cover with water 2 inches above beans and let soak overnight. Drain beans. Add 2 quarts water and next 4 ingredients. Cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 ½ hours or until beans are tender. Add remaining ingredients and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Yield: 8 cups.

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