

Heart-Healthy Diet: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

A heart-healthy diet has lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, and whole grains, and is low in salt. It limits foods that are high in saturated fat, such as meats, cheeses, and fried foods. It may be hard to change your diet, but even small changes can lower your risk of heart attack and heart disease.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Watch your portions

- Use food labels to learn what the recommended servings are for the foods you eat.
- Eat only the number of calories you need to stay at a healthy weight. If you need to lose weight, eat fewer calories than your body burns (through exercise and other physical activity).

Eat more fruits and vegetables

- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Dark green, deep orange, red, or yellow fruits and vegetables are especially good for you. Examples include spinach, carrots, peaches, and berries.
- Keep carrots, celery, and other veggies handy for snacks. Buy fruit that is in season and store it where you can see it so that you will be tempted to eat it.
- Cook dishes that have a lot of veggies in them, such as stir-fries and soups.

Limit saturated fat

- Read food labels, and try to avoid saturated fats. They increase your risk of heart disease.
- Use olive or canola oil when you cook.
- Bake, broil, grill, or steam foods instead of frying them.
- Choose lean meats instead of high-fat meats such as hot dogs and sausages. Cut off all visible fat when you prepare meat.
- Eat fish, skinless poultry, and meat alternatives such as soy products instead of high-fat meats. Soy products, such as tofu, may be especially good for your heart.

- Choose low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products.

Eat foods high in fiber

- Eat a variety of grain products every day. Include whole-grain foods that have lots of fiber and nutrients. Examples of whole-grain foods include oats, whole wheat bread, and brown rice.
- Buy whole-grain breads and cereals, instead of white bread or pastries.

Limit salt and sodium

- Limit how much salt and sodium you eat to help lower your blood pressure.
- Taste food before you salt it. Add only a little salt when you think you need it. With time, your taste buds will adjust to less salt.
- Eat fewer snack items, fast foods, and other high-salt, processed foods. Check food labels for the amount of sodium in packaged foods.
- Choose low-sodium versions of canned goods (such as soups, vegetables, and beans).

Limit sugar

- Limit drinks and foods with added sugar. These include candy, desserts, and soda pop.

Limit alcohol

- Limit alcohol to no more than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women. Too much alcohol can cause health problems.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You would like help planning heart-healthy meals.

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