

# Heart Health 3

*February is Heart Health month!*

*This is the 3rd week of 4 in which we provide you with information on how to contribute to your heart health.*

## **What we eat and the risk for heart disease**

We know that eating certain foods can increase our heart disease risk. We also know it's good for us to *"Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, high-fiber foods, lean sources of protein and limit foods high in saturated fat and salt."* But it's so difficult to change eating habits.

Whether you have been eating unhealthy for years or you want to fine-tune your diet, here are some tips. Once you know which foods to eat more of and which foods to limit, you'll be on your way toward a heart-healthier diet, which can prevent heart disease.

## **Healthy diet tips to incorporate it into YOUR life**

### ⇒ Control your portion size

How much you eat is just as important as what you eat! Keep track of the number and size of your servings. For example, one serving of pasta is about 1/3 to 1/2 cup, one serving of meat, fish or chicken is about 2 to 3 ounces. Focus on larger portions of low-calorie, nutrient-rich foods, and smaller portions of high-calorie, high-sodium foods (refined, processed or fast foods).

### ⇒ Eat more vegetables and fruits

Vegetables and fruits are good sources of vitamins and minerals, low in calories and rich in dietary fiber. Plant-based foods contain substances that may help prevent cardiovascular disease. Eating more fruits and vegetables may help you cut back on higher calorie foods, such as meat, cheese and snack foods. Keep vegetables washed and cut in your refrigerator, and fruit in a bowl in your kitchen for quick snacks. Choose recipes that have vegetables or fruits as the main ingredients.

### ⇒ Select whole grains

Whole grains are good sources of fiber and nutrients that play a role in regulating blood pressure and heart health. Increase the amount of whole grains by substituting refined grain products. Or try a new whole grain, such as whole-grain farro, quinoa or barley.

### ⇒ Choose low-fat protein sources

Lean meat, poultry and fish, low-fat dairy products, and eggs are some of your best sources of protein. Some fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which can lower blood fats called triglycerides. So can flaxseed, walnuts, soybeans and canola oil. Beans, peas and lentils are good sources of protein and contain less fat and no cholesterol. Substituting plant protein for animal protein will reduce your fat and cholesterol intake and increase your fiber intake.

⇒ Limit unhealthy fats

Limiting saturated and trans fats is important to reduce blood cholesterol and your risk of coronary artery disease. Trim fat off your meat or choose lean meats with less than 10 percent fat and add less butter to your meals. Find substitution you like - top your baked potato with low-sodium salsa or low-fat yogurt, use sliced whole fruit or low-sugar fruit spread on your toast instead of margarine. Check the food labels! Choose monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil or canola oil, and polyunsaturated fats, found in certain fish, avocados, nuts and seeds, as they may help lower blood cholesterol. But remember, all types of fat are high in calories. An easy way to add healthy fat (and fiber) is with ground flaxseed.

⇒ Reduce the sodium in your food

Reducing sodium intake is an important part of a heart-healthy diet. The American Heart Association recommends that healthy adults have no more than about a teaspoon of salt a day. Much of the salt we eat comes from canned or processed foods, Eating fresh foods and making your own soups and stews can reduce the amount of salt you eat. Again, read the labels and look for products with reduced sodium.

⇒ Plan ahead: Create daily menus

You know what foods to include and which ones to limit. Now it's time to put your plans into action. Create daily menus using the strategies listed above. When selecting foods for each meal and snack, emphasize vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Choose lean protein sources and healthy fats, and limit salty foods. Watch your portion sizes and add variety to your menu choices.

⇒ Allow yourself an occasional treat

Do indulge every now and then! But don't let it turn into an excuse for giving up on your healthy-eating plan. What's important is that you eat healthy foods most of the time.

Incorporate these tips into your life, and you'll find that heart-healthy eating is both doable and enjoyable. With planning and a few simple substitutions, you can eat with your heart in mind.

Grain products to choose	Grain products to limit or avoid	Fats to choose	Fats to limit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-wheat flour</li> <li>• Whole-grain bread, preferably 100% whole-wheat bread or 100% whole-grain bread</li> <li>• High-fiber cereal with 5 g or more fiber in a serving</li> <li>• Whole grains such as brown rice, barley and buckwheat (kasha)</li> <li>• Whole-grain pasta</li> <li>• Oatmeal (steel-cut or regular)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White, refined flour</li> <li>• White bread</li> <li>• Muffins</li> <li>• Frozen waffles</li> <li>• Corn bread</li> <li>• Doughnuts</li> <li>• Biscuits</li> <li>• Quick breads</li> <li>• Cakes</li> <li>• Pies</li> <li>• Egg noodles</li> <li>• Buttered popcorn</li> <li>• High-fat snack crackers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olive oil</li> <li>• Canola oil</li> <li>• Vegetable and nut oils</li> <li>• Margarine, trans fat free</li> <li>• Cholesterol-lowering margarine, such as Benecol, Promise Activ or Smart Balance</li> <li>• Nuts, seeds</li> <li>• Avocados</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter</li> <li>• Lard</li> <li>• Bacon fat</li> <li>• Gravy</li> <li>• Cream sauce</li> <li>• Nondairy creamers</li> <li>• Hydrogenated margarine and shortening</li> <li>• Cocoa butter, found in chocolate</li> <li>• Coconut, palm, cottonseed and palm-kernel oils</li> </ul>

*Next week we will talk about managing stress and sleep.*