

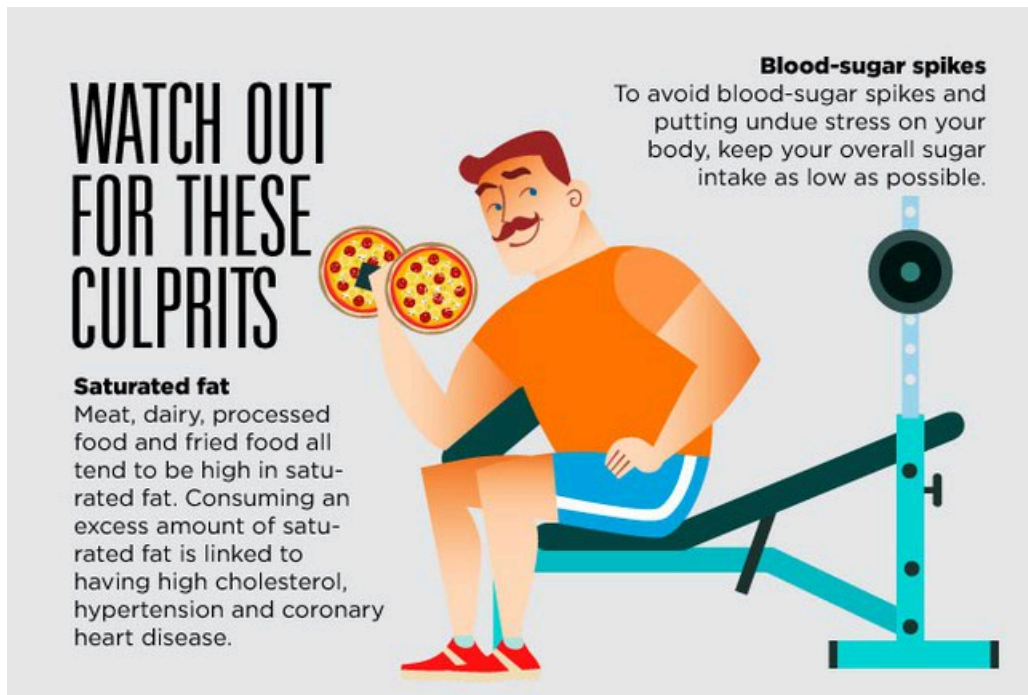
August 24, 2024



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CONTENT PRESENTED BY SOUTHERN HILLS HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER

## Can you really work off that pizza?



Sunday, Feb. 21, 2016 | 2 a.m.

You had a few too many slices and decide to hit the gym extra hard to work them off. That may help keep your weight down, but it won't reverse the other adverse effects unhealthy

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### SCENE ON THE SUN

While many people, especially younger people, rely on exercise to balance out a primarily bad diet, the truth is that no amount of exercise can undo bad eating. “The saying goes, ‘You can’t outrun a bad diet.’ Even if you maintain a healthy body weight, your health will absolutely suffer from unhealthy food. The size of someone’s body ultimately has very little to do with what’s going on inside,” said Syed Zaidi, MD, a cardiologist at Health Care Partners and Southern Hills Hospital and Medical Center.

### The lasting effects of eating unhealthy food

While exercising regularly can help protect the body from many diseases, foods high in sugar, fat and/or sodium can still negatively affect the body long after the calories are burned off. A diet too rich in these ingredients can lead to diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension and coronary heart disease. “The inner lining of the heart arteries are especially sensitive to harmful effects of bad diets. Foods with excess fat and cholesterol can cause inflammation in those arteries and increase the risk of heart attack,” Zaidi said.

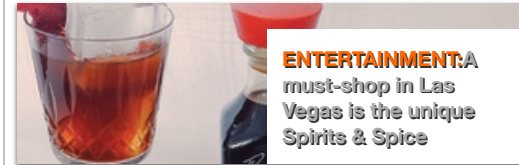
Even young, seemingly healthy people can be at risk for developing coronary heart disease from eating a poor diet. Zaidi warns that this is especially true when combined with other risk factors, such as having a strong family history of premature coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, high cholesterol and/or smoking.

“Most risk factors can be modified and limited by following a healthy diet and exercise plan, but it’s important that people are aware of what their risk factors are. Some people can get away with eating foods that other people just can’t, so knowing what your body can and cannot tolerate is necessary,” Zaidi said.

Early warning signs of heart disease can include onset of chest pain, particularly when provoked by exertion or strenuous activity. This can feel like a heaviness in the chest or a sharp pain, or can present in atypical locations, such as the arm, jaw, upper back or upper abdomen. Other symptoms can include shortness of breath, excessive fatigue and heart palpitations.

### The culprits

- **Blood-sugar spikes:** To avoid blood-sugar spikes and putting undue stress on your body, Zaidi recommends keeping your overall sugar intake as low as possible (and not just refined sugars).



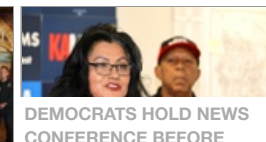
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“People should beware of sugar in all forms. White sugar isn’t the only problem — agave nectar, organic evaporated cane juice, beet sugar, molasses, maple syrup, corn syrup, brown rice syrup, etc. — it’s all still sugar,” Zaidi said.

- Saturated fat: Meat, dairy, processed food and fried food all tend to be high in saturated fat. Consuming an excess amount of saturated fat is linked to having high cholesterol, hypertension and coronary heart disease. However, not all fat is bad. Unsaturated fats such as omega-3 fatty acids are linked to many heart-related benefits.

### **What to look out for on a nutritional label**

When it comes to nutritional labels, the most problematic ingredients can vary drastically from person to person. For instance, someone with Type 2 diabetes should avoid entirely different ingredients than someone with a history of weight loss from cancer. However, for the average person, the most concerning ingredients are usually sugar and saturated fat.

### **What about cheat days?**

For people who generally eat healthy and exercise regularly, an occasional “cheat day” can be a good mood-booster and help keep people motivated while pursuing diet and exercise goals.

“Periodic high-calorie splurges can sometimes be beneficial, both mentally and physically. Days and weeks of eating nothing but grilled chicken and vegetables can wear down even the most dedicated of individuals, so having the occasional splurge can help break the monotony and reaffirm goals. But it also can lead down a slippery slope, so it’s important to observe the rules of moderation,” Zaidi said.

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