

Heart Disease: Nutrition Guidelines for Treatment

Improving diet and lifestyle is an important part of treating heart disease. If you have abnormal blood lipids and/or have had a stroke or heart attack, watching your diet can help keep you healthy. The following tips may help prevent further heart problems. In addition, your doctor may provide more specific guidelines for you to follow.



Caloric Intake and Physical Activity

Balance caloric intake and physical activity to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight.

These suggestions can help:

- Prepare and eat small portions of food
- Read labels to understand how many calories you eat each day
- Exercise 30 to 60 minutes/day (if possible)
- Build extra physical activity into your day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or parking farther away from a building

Benefit: The proper balance of caloric intake and physical activity may help keep you from becoming overweight or help you lose weight. Overweight is associated with increased risk of heart disease and could cause you to have more heart problems.

Fruits and Vegetables

Consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

Follow these tips:

- Enjoy brightly colored fruits and vegetables for the most nutrients
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables each day
- Prepare fruits and vegetables without added fat and sugar, if possible
- Enjoy fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables to help meet your fruit and vegetable intake needs

Benefit: Fruits and vegetables are loaded with nutrients, and are low in fat, sodium, sugar, and calories.

Whole-grain, high-fiber foods

Enjoy whole-grain, high-fiber foods, such as:

- Barley
- Bran cereals
- Brown rice
- Buckwheat
- Bulgur
- Corn
- Millet
- Oatmeal
- Popcorn
- Quinoa
- Rye
- Sorghum

- Triticale
- Whole-wheat breads
- Wild rice

Benefit: Whole grains are loaded with nutrients.

Fish

Consume fish, especially oily fish, at least twice each week.

Follow this advice:

- Select oily fish when possible, such as:
 - Herring
 - Mackerel
 - Salmon
 - Sardines
 - Trout
 - Tuna
 - Choose other types of fish as part of a healthy diet

Benefit: Fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which may decrease your risk of more heart problems and sudden death from heart disease.

Saturated Fat, Trans Fat, and Cholesterol

Limit your intake of saturated fat to <7% of calories, trans fat to <1% of calories, and cholesterol to <300 milligrams/day.

These suggestions will help:

- Choose lean meats and vegetable alternatives to meat, such as dried beans
- Select fat-free, skim, or 1% milk, and low-fat cheese and yogurt
- Minimize intake of fats, such as margarine and other partially hydrogenated fats
- Use liquid oils over solid fats when cooking or baking (whenever possible)
- Cut back on pastries and bakery products, such as muffins and doughnuts

Benefit: Diets low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol can reduce the risk of more heart problems.

Added Sugar

Eat and drink fewer beverages and foods that contain added sugars.

These tips may help:

- Limit beverages high in added sugars, such as soda, fruit punch, and sweetened coffees and teas
- Reduce the number of foods you eat that contain added sugars, such as cakes, cookies, pies, and candies

Benefit: By eating fewer foods and beverages with added sugar, you may help prevent unwanted weight gain. Weight gain might contribute to more heart problems.

Salt

Choose and prepare foods with little or no added salt.

Follow these suggestions:

- Choose reduced-sodium versions of foods
- Use dried herbs and spices and less salt for cooking and seasoning foods
- Limit high-sodium condiments, such as soy sauce, ketchup, etc

Benefit: Consuming foods with little or no added salt may help treat and prevent high blood pressure.

Other Dietary Factors

Fish oil supplements containing omega-3 fatty acids

- You may benefit from omega-3 supplements (fish oil capsules), if your triglyceride level is high
- Your doctor might recommend 2 to 4 grams (g) of eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid/day—take this supplement only with the knowledge of your physician

Antioxidant supplements

- Antioxidant supplements are not proven to provide benefits to reduce heart disease risk or treatment of heart disease
- Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are recommended as sources of antioxidants, instead of supplements

Folate and other B vitamins

- Supplements of folate or other B vitamins are not noted for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease or treating heart disease

Plant sterols/stanols

- Plant sterols/stanols may lower low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels
- An intake of about 2 g/day is recommended
- Plant sterols are available in fortified foods and drinks

Soy protein

- Little evidence exists to prove that soy protein improves heart health
- Consumption of soy foods may indirectly reduce heart disease risk by replacing foods high in fat and cholesterol, such as high-fat meats and dairy foods

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To learn more about strategies for heart healthy eating, schedule a nutrition consultation or health coaching session with Lisa Carr at 401.487.8660 or Lisa@LisaRCarr.com