

Heart Healthy Eating Habits



The secrets to heart healthy nutrition include habits based upon variety and balance. Here are tips from the American Heart Association.....

by Rebecca Morley, MA

Variety from all food groups. You may be eating plenty of food, but your body may still not be getting the nutrients it needs. Nutrient rich foods contain vitamins, minerals and fiber, but are lower in calories. Choose fruits, vegetables, fish, whole-grain, high fiber foods (whole-grain breads, cereals, pasta, and rice) and fat-free or low-fat dairy products. Eat foods in a naturally occurring rainbow of colors, trying to hit all colors weekly.

Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

Choose deeply colored vegetables and fruits that tend to be higher in vitamins and minerals than others. (examples: spinach, tomatoes, carrots, nectarines, and berries).

Choose whole-grain, high fiber food.

Unrefined whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help lower blood cholesterol levels. Fiber makes us feel full and is useful in weight management. Aim for 25 grams of fiber each day. Consider adding rye, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, quinoa, and sorghum to your main staples of whole-wheat, oats, brown rice, barely, and popcorn. Remember to make whole-grains the first ingredient to up fiber and nutrients.

Include at least 2 servings of fish each week.

Many fish are high in omega 3 fatty acids shown to help lower risk of coronary heart disease. Good choices are wild salmon, trout, tilapia and herring. If fish does not work for you, consider fish oil or flaxseed oil tablets to assure intake of omega 3 fatty acids.

Use healthier unsaturated fats, but limit to no more than 30% of your daily calorie load.

There are basically three types of fats, saturated, unsaturated and trans fats. Diets high in saturated and trans-fat raise the level of LDL ~~bad~~+cholesterol. Replacing these unhealthy fats with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats can help lower bad cholesterol levels.



Heart Healthy "Meat" Tips



Use lean meats, trim fat, no skin. Loin or round are leaner cuts.

Prepare meats by grilling, baking or broiling

Use vegetable-based substitutes such as beans or tofu

Stretch the amount of meat used by adding whole-grain fillers such as pasta, rice, barely, beans, or quinoa. Make a stir-fry

Reduce processed meats such as salami, bacon, sausage, and luncheon meats

Baste/marinade your own meats to lower salt and fat through healthier choices

Beware of fish known to be high in mercury such as swordfish, shark, king mackerel and others high on the food-chain

Read those labels, and replace processed with whole foods, reduce sodium and extra calories to enhance heart health benefits.

For February's Heart Month Activities see www.americanheartassociation.com

Eat Smart Program * Missoula City-County Health Department
(406) 258-3827 * www.co.missoula.mt.us/healthservices/EatSmart

