

Nutrition Tips for a Healthy Heart

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February is American Heart Month and people with diabetes need to protect their heart with healthy eating, physical activity and by taking the proper medications if needed. According to the American Diabetes Association, 2 out of 3 people with diabetes die from heart disease and stroke.

The general nutrition recommendations for a healthy heart healthy include:

Decrease saturated fat. Saturated fat can raise blood cholesterol levels. It is found in butter, red meat, bacon, sausage, cheese, cream, and whole milk. It comes mainly from animal products.

Decrease trans-fat. Trans Fat can also raise blood cholesterol and is found in small amounts in red meat, but most trans fat is created. It is created when manufacturers use hydrogenated oils; therefore it is found in a lot of processed foods. Read labels and choose foods without trans fat

Choose foods higher in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Foods high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats include, almonds, nuts, avocado, and olive oil. These fats may have a beneficial effect on your blood cholesterol. Remember; keep these foods in moderation if you need to lose weight.

Eat fish two times per week. According to the American Heart Association eating fish two times per week can lower your risk of heart disease. Fish such as, salmon, tuna and mackerel are especially high in omega-3 fatty acids, which may decrease the risk of blood clots and can also lower triglyceride levels.

Eat more nuts. The FDA has stated that “evidence suggest but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol and not resulting in increased caloric intake may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.” This included peanuts, almonds, pistachios, walnuts and pecans.

Eat high-fiber foods. Fiber may help lower cholesterol. Foods high in fiber include: whole-wheat breads and crackers, oatmeal, fresh fruit, vegetables, beans, and high-fiber cereals.

Here are some easy nutrition tips you can try today to follow the above recommendations:

Try reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese on your tacos in place of regular cheese.

Use lean ground turkey for a burger instead of beef.

Substitute a small piece of fresh fruit at lunch for chips or pretzels.

Try breading fish in crushed cornflakes or bran flakes and baking it instead of frying.

Add some toasted almonds to your salad instead of croutons.

Try making a bran muffin (use All-Bran cereal® - the recipe is on the box) for breakfast.

You can make a bunch and freeze them.

Add a slice of avocado to your turkey sandwich instead of cheese.

Make tuna salad with light mayonnaise and extra celery; serve in a whole-wheat pita.

Have 5 whole-wheat crackers with 2 teaspoons peanut butter for an afternoon snack.

Make a yogurt parfait for breakfast – use light yogurt, fresh berries and toasted almonds.

Add walnuts and cinnamon to your oatmeal for a twist.

Substitute a bean soup and salad with light dressing for your cream soup and bread.

Try a trans-fat free margarine in place of butter or other margarine.

Try making a chicken chili instead of traditional beef chili – use chicken breast and white beans.