

# HEALTHY HEART DIET

- The goal of a healthy heart diet is to decrease your risk of heart disease. Some of the major risk factors for heart disease are high cholesterol, high blood pressure and being overweight. Cholesterol is a type of fat that is found in your blood. Making changes to your diet, lowering your blood pressure, and losing weight are ways to decrease your risk for heart disease. Other ways to decrease your risk include getting more exercise and stopping smoking.
- A healthy heart diet limits fat and cholesterol to help lower your cholesterol. Adding soluble fiber to your diet may also help to decrease your cholesterol levels. Decreasing the amount of sodium that you eat and drink may help to control your blood pressure. You may also lose weight on this diet because decreasing your fat intake will decrease your calorie intake. Decreasing calories in your diet can help you to lose weight.

**What should I avoid eating and drinking while on a healthy heart diet?** Avoid eating foods that are high in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Learn to read food labels on packaged foods before buying them. Ask your caregiver for more information about how to read food labels. The following foods are very high in saturated fat or cholesterol.

- **Bread and other carbohydrates:**
  - Biscuits, croissants and store-bought muffins
  - Cakes, cookies, donuts, pies, pastries
  - French fries, hash browns and fry bread
  - Granola
  - Snack chips
- **Dairy:**
  - Whole milk, evaporated whole milk and sweetened condensed milk
  - Half and half creamer
  - Hard or semi-soft cheese
  - Ice cream
  - Cheddar cheese soup or French onion soup topped with cheese
  - Soups made with cream, half and half, or whole milk
- **Fruits and vegetables:**
  - Fruits baked into high fat desserts, such as pastries, pies or cakes
  - Fruit fritters
  - Fruit ice cream
  - Avocado (more than one-quarter of an avocado) or regular guacamole dip
  - Fried or batter dipped vegetables, or vegetables prepared with butter, cream or cheese sauce

- **Meats and meat substitutes:**
  - Bacon, fatback, ham hocks, or sausages
  - Fish canned in oil, or ham, cold cuts, or lunchmeats
  - Hot dogs, spare ribs, chimichangas, and other fried foods
  - Lamb, mutton, liver, sweetbreads, or organ meats
  - Cheese dips
  - Eggs (more than four per week)
  
- **Fats:**
  - Butter, margarine or shortening with hydrogenated oils or lard
  - Coconut or coconut milk, or foods containing palm kernel, or coconut oil
  - Heavy, table, or whipping cream, or regular sour cream or cream cheese

**What can I eat and drink while on a healthy heart diet?** Ask your dietician or caregiver how many servings to eat each day from each of the following groups of foods. The amount of servings you should eat in each food group will depend on your daily calorie needs. The following is one serving of each food group:

- **Breads and other carbohydrates:** Most people need 6 to 11 servings of breads and other carbohydrates every day.
  - One slice of bread (4 inch square) or half of a 3 inch bagel
  - One small (2 inch square) dinner roll or half of a hamburger or hot dog bun or English muffin
  - Three-fourths of a cup of flaked cereal or one-third of a cup of cooked cereal such as oatmeal or farina
  - One-half cup of corn or peas or one medium corn-on-the-cob
  - One-third of cooked pasta or rice, or one-half cup of mashed potatoes, or one three-inch baked potato
  - Six crackers or three squares of graham crackers
  - One ounce of fat-free or baked potato chips or corn chips
  - Half of a six-inch pita bread or one 6-inch round tortilla
  
- **Dairy:** Most people need 2 to 3 servings of dairy products every day.
  - One cup of skim or 1% fat milk
  - One-third cup nonfat dry milk powder
  - One-half cup of low fat or fat-free frozen yogurt or ice milk
  - One cup of fat-free yogurt
  
- **Fruits:** Most people need 2 to 4 servings of fruit every day
  - One-fourth of a cup of raisins, prunes, or other dried fruit
  - One-half cup of canned fruit or applesauce
  - One and one-fourth of a cup of any kind of berries
  - One and one-half cups of cubed melon
  - One small banana or half of a large (9 inch) banana
  - One medium (3 inch) apple, peach, or orange

- Half of a fresh grapefruit or a large pear
- Two small plums or tangerines
- Seventeen small or 12 large grapes

- **Vegetables:** Most people need 3 to 5 servings of vegetables every day. One serving of vegetables is one cup of raw vegetables, or one-half cup of cooked vegetables
  - Salads including greens such as lettuce, spinach, or Romaine, and carrots, broccoli, celery, cucumber, radishes and other raw vegetables
  - Cooked fresh or frozen vegetables, such as Brussels sprouts, squash, asparagus, eggplant, beets, green beans, and turnips. Choose a variety of brightly-colored vegetables
- **Meats and meat products:** Most people need 2 to 3 servings of meat and meat products every day
  - Three ounces of chicken or turkey without skin
  - Three ounces of cooked fish or shellfish
  - Three ounces of lean beef, pork, low fat ham, turkey, or other deli meats
  - Three-fourths of a cup of fat-free or low fat cottage or ricotta cheese
  - One-inch cube or one ounce of low fat cheese
  - Two tablespoons of low fat Parmesan cheese
  - Two egg whites or one half-cup of fat-free egg substitutes
  - One egg (eat less than 4 per week)
  - One-half of a cup of cooked dried peas, beans and lentils
  - Two tablespoons of peanut butter
- **Fats:** Most people need 1 to 3 servings of fats every day.
  - One-eighth of a medium avocado
  - One teaspoon of certain oils such as canola, olive, peanut, soybean, or safflower
  - One teaspoon of low fat or regular soft margarine or mayonnaise. Buy only margarine that has liquid oils as the first and second ingredients listed on the food label
  - One tablespoon of regular salad dressing or two tablespoons of low fat salad dressing
  - Two tablespoons of low fat or fat-free sour cream or cream cheese
  - Two table spoons of sesame seeds, six almonds, or 10 peanuts
  - Two teaspoons of peanut butter

### **What are some other ways to decrease the amount of fat in my diet?**

- Keep your total fat intake at 30% or less of your daily calories. You can do this by eating low fat foods and avoiding high fat foods. Choose packaged foods with less than 30% of calories as fat. Read the labels on packaged foods before buying them. Many products have lower-fat options.
- Cut off fat from all meats before cooking them. Remove the skin from poultry (chicken). Do not fry meat, fish, or poultry. Bake, roast, boil, or broil these foods instead. Avoid eating fried foods. Eat a baked potato instead of French fries. Steam vegetables instead of sautéing them in butter.

- Choose low fat or fat-free dairy products. Remember that fat-free does not mean “calorie-free”. These foods still contain calories and too many calories can cause weight gain. Add less fat to foods. Use imitation bacon bits on salads and baked potatoes instead of regular bacon bits. Use low or nonfat butter-flavoring topping instead of regular butter or margarine on popcorn and other foods.

**How can I increase the amount of fiber in my diet?** Eat enough high fiber foods to get 20 to 35 grams of fiber every day. To avoid stomach cramps, gas, and other problems, slowly increase your fiber intake. Ask your caregiver for more information about adding fiber to your diet. Following are ways to increase fiber in your diet:

- For breakfast, eat a high-fiber cereal. Oatmeal is a good source of soluble fiber. Look for cereals that have bran or fiber in the name. Choose whole grain products like brown rice, barley and whole wheat pasta.
- Eat whole grain breads like whole wheat bread. Whole-wheat flour, or other whole grains should be listed as the first ingredient on the food label. Add bran cereal or unprocessed wheat bran to baked products. Replace whole grain flour for white flour or use half of each when baking bread. Whole grain flour is heavier than white flour so you may have to change your recipe by adding more yeast or baking powder.
- Add beans, peas and lentils to your diet. You can do this by adding beans to soups or salads. Beans are also a good source of soluble fiber. Eat at least 5 different fruits and vegetables each day. Eat fruits and vegetables with the peels (skins) on, such as potatoes, apples, cucumbers, pears, or peaches. You can add fruits to your diet by eating them during meals and snacks. A baked potato (with skin) is a good source of soluble fiber.

**How can I decrease the amount of sodium in my diet?** Eat less than 2400 milligrams (mg) of sodium every day. You can do this by avoiding salt and salty foods. Ask your caregiver if you should have fewer dairy foods, since some dairy foods have large amounts of sodium. Following are other ways to decrease the amount of sodium in your diet:

- Do not use extra salt when cooking or eating food. Buy only frozen, canned or packaged foods with less than 400 mg of sodium per serving. Read labels to check the amount of sodium in foods before buying them. Many products have lower-salt options.
- Try salt-free seasonings to give variety to your meals and snacks. Basil, oregano, savory, thyme, or sage can be a nice addition to meals. Chili or curry powder, or ground black or white pepper can spice food up. Parsley, rosemary, marjoram, tarragon, chives and dill weed can add color and flavor to meals. Onion or garlic that is fresh or in powder form, dry mustard, or lemon or lime juice will add flavor to meals. Salt substitutes may also be used, but do not use one with potassium chloride until asking your caregiver.
- Eat less canned, salted, and smoke meat and fish. Some examples of these foods are ham, hot dogs, lunchmeats, corned beef, and sardines, bacon and sausage.
- Eat fewer salted snacks, such as popcorn, nuts, pretzels, potato chips, crackers, cheeses and cheese spreads. Certain sauces, juices, soups, mixes, and seasonings are also high in sodium. Some examples include barbecue sauce, steak sauce, and soy sauce. Other examples of foods

high in sodium chloride include canned tomato or vegetable juices, canned soup, and dried mixes.

- Garlic, onion, seasoning, and table salt should be avoided. Meat tenderizers and softened water may also contain large amounts of sodium. Pickles, olives, and buttermilk contain a lot of salt.

#### **Risks:**

- If you are at risk for heart disease and do not follow the diet suggestions made by your caregiver, you may develop serious medical problems. Atherosclerosis (a build-up of fat-like substances in blood vessels) may lead to blood clots, and a heart attack. Heart muscle may be damaged and cause disability or death. High blood cholesterol puts you at a higher risk of heart attack and stroke. Untreated high blood pressure may lead to a stroke (blood clot in the brain). It can also lead to a heart attack or heart or kidney failure.
- Obesity is linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. This includes cancer of the breast, colon, or prostate in men. Other health problems linked to obesity include bone and joint problems, breathing problems, and emotional suffering. For more information about following a healthy heart diet contact:

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