

# The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations

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A healthy diet and lifestyle are the keys to preventing and managing cardiovascular disease. It's not as hard as you may think! Remember, it's the overall pattern of your choices that counts. Make the simple steps below part of your life for long-term benefits to your health and your heart.

## Use up at least as many calories as you take in.

- Start by knowing how many calories you should be eating and drinking to maintain your weight. Nutrition and calorie information on food labels is typically based on a 2,000 calorie per day diet. You may need fewer or more calories depending on several factors including age, gender, and level of physical activity.
- Increase the amount and intensity of your physical activity to burn more calories.
- Aim for at least [150 minutes of moderate physical activity](#) or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity (or an equal combination of both) each week.

Regular physical activity can help you maintain your weight, keep off weight that you lose and reach physical and cardiovascular fitness. If it's hard to schedule regular exercise, look for ways to build short bursts of activity into your daily routine such as parking farther away and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Ideally, your activity should be spread throughout the week.

## Eat an overall healthy dietary pattern that emphasizes:

- a wide variety of [fruits and vegetables](#)
- whole grains and products made up mostly of [whole grains](#)
- [healthy sources of protein](#) (mostly plants such as legumes and [nuts](#); [fish and seafood](#); low-fat or nonfat dairy; and, if you eat meat and poultry, ensuring it is lean and unprocessed)
- liquid non-tropical vegetable [oils](#)
- minimally [processed foods](#)
- minimized intake of [added sugars](#)
- foods prepared with little or no [salt](#)
- limited or preferably no alcohol intake

# Apply this guidance wherever food is prepared or consumed.

It is possible to follow a heart-healthy dietary pattern regardless of whether food is prepared at home, [ordered in a restaurant or online](#), or purchased as a prepared meal. Read the [Nutrition Facts](#) and [ingredient list](#) on packaged food labels to choose those with less sodium, added sugars and saturated fat. Look for the [Heart-Check mark](#) to find foods that have been certified by the American Heart Association as heart-healthy.

## Live Tobacco Free

Don't smoke, vape or use tobacco or nicotine products — and avoid secondhand smoke or vapor.

Learn more about [quitting smoking](#).