



Healthy Eating

Overview

Make it your mission to fight heart disease through healthy food choices. A healthy diet and lifestyle are some of your best weapons to fight cardiovascular disease. However, there are a lot of mixed messages and myths out there regarding healthy eating. With all the differing opinions, it's best to get informed from credible sources, so you can make smart choices about your diet. It's the overall pattern of your choices that counts most — think nutrition.

Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, but are lower in calories. The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a wide variety of nutritious foods daily.

American Heart Association's components of a healthy diet

1. Vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber — and they're low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and blood pressure.
2. Unrefined whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help lower your blood cholesterol and help you feel full, which may help you manage your weight.
3. Eat fish at least twice a week. Recent research shows that eating oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout and herring) may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.
4. Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day.
5. Keep your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages to less than 36 oz per week.

Tips for a healthy diet

- Eat slowly, take smaller portions and avoid "seconds."
- Cook foods in ways that do not add fat, like baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing.
- When you really crave a high-calorie food, eat a small amount and forget about it, instead of resisting until you give in and gorge. If you don't trust yourself with just a little, don't eat any at all.
- Keep saturated fat to less than 7 percent of energy; use red meat sparingly and choose lean or extra-lean cuts.

Learn more about healthy eating and heart disease at heart.org/nutrition.