

LIFESTYLE: Heart Healthy

In general, a heart healthy program may include:

- Dietary Modifications
- Elimination of Smoking
- Increased Relaxation
- Restricted Use of Salt
- Moderate Exercise
- Reduction of Weight
- Reduction of Stress

Objectives:

- How to limit sodium
- Explain dietary modifications for heart health
- Exercise basics
- Encourage stress reduction

The Standard American Diet (S.A.D.) and the typical American lifestyle does not lend itself toward heart health. You must create intentionality with what/where you eat and how you live.

LIMITING SODIUM

Even if you are taking medications for your blood pressure, you should still limit how much sodium you consume. In general people with high blood pressure should consume 1,500 mg sodium per day. You can find out how much sodium is in a food by reading the food label. In general, foods with more than 300 mg sodium per serving may not fit into your meal plan.

Choose carefully when you eat away from home. Restaurant foods can be very high in sodium. Most excessive salt intake is not due to the salt shaker, but packages/ frozen foods and eating out. Foods that are almost always high in sodium include:

- **Smoked, processed or cured meats** (*including lunch meats, hot dogs, sausage*)
- **Tomato juices and sauce**
- **Bouillon cubes**
- **Salty snacks** (*potato chips, pretzels, etc.*)
- **Prepared salad dressing**
- **Condiments** (*catsup and mustard*)
- **Sauces, such as soy sauce**
- **Packaged rice and noodle dinners**
- **Frozen entrees**
- **Canned soup**

TERM USED	CLAIM EXPLAINED
Sodium free or salt free:	Less than 5 mg sodium per serving
Very low sodium:	35 mg of sodium or less per serving
Low sodium:	140 mg sodium or less per serving
Reduced sodium or less sodium:	At least 25% less sodium than the regular versions

Dietary Modifications

Eating the right types of fats, enough fiber and whole foods reduces the build-up of plaque in your blood vessels. This lowers your risk for strokes or heart attacks. Learning how to read a nutrition label and increasing your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables is crucial to eating a heart healthy diet. See a brief explanation of nutrients below:



Fats:

1. Saturated Fats – Consume in moderation. Solid at room temperature, usually found in animal products; linked to heart disease.

- **Animal Sources:** butter, lard, bacon, sausage, dairy products (*increased with fat %*), meat (*increased with “marbling”*), skin from chicken and turkey;

- **Plant Sources:** coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil

2. Trans Fats – Avoid consuming. Found in packaged, self-stable desserts and hydrogenated oils; linked to heart disease.

- **Sources:** boxed cakes, cookies, doughnuts, candy bars, pastries, fried food, hard margarines, shortening

3. Unsaturated Fats (poly & mono) – Consume for heart health. Liquid at room temperature, usually found in plant products; various health benefits.

- **Polyunsaturated Sources:** safflower oil, sunflower oil, fish, walnuts, pumpkin seeds;

- **Monounsaturated Sources:** olives, olive oil, peanuts, canola oil, sesame seeds, almonds, pecans, avocado

A quick way to find heart-healthy foods is to check the nutrient content claims on the label (see table). Be mindful that a food low in fat usually has added sugar to compensate for flavor lost. When eating for heart health, focus on whole foods in their natural good or low-fat state.

TERM USED	CLAIM EXPLAINED
Fat free:	Less than 0.5 g of fat or saturated fat per serving
Saturated fat free:	Less than 0.5 g of saturated fat and less than 0.5 g of trans fatty acids
Low fat:	3 g or less total fat
Low saturated fat:	1 g or less saturated fat
Reduced fat or less fat:	At least 25% less fat than the regular version

Fiber:

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate and listed on the nutrition label under 'total carbohydrates'. Most food containing carbohydrates serve as your main energy source since carbohydrates in food turn into glucose for fuel. Fiber is different since fiber is not digested or broken down in your GI tract. Fiber instead feeds the bacteria in your gut.

Most Americans do not eat the recommended amount of fiber daily (20-25 grams for women; 30-35 grams for men). Fiber prevents constipation, helps lower cholesterol, prevents some types of cancer, helps with appetite and weight control, and plays an important role in regulating blood sugar when eating certain foods. Starch and fiber are found in whole wheat breads and other grains, vegetables, beans, peas, corn and whole fruit.

TERM USED	CLAIM EXPLAINED
High Fiber:	5 g of fiber or more per serving
Good source of fiber:	2.5 g to 4.9 g of fiber per serving

DAILY FIBER

Women: 20-25 grams

Men: 30-35 grams

EXERCISE BASICS

Physical activity is any movement that increases your heart rate and burns calories. The simplest positive change you can make to improve your heart health is to start walking! Set aside time each day to go for an enjoyable, social, free and great walk.

To improve overall cardiovascular health, the American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise (walking) per week or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise (running) per week (or a combination of the two). There are many types of exercise you can start today including such as balance exercise, endurance (aerobic) exercise, flexibility (stretching) exercise,

strength training, walking and yoga. Visit the American Heart Association's physical activity page to learn more and have access to great free resources. Any movement away from a sedentary lifestyle will have health benefits for your heart so get started today! Start by setting a reachable goal and get moving.

“Set a goal and get Moving”

STRESS REDUCTION

Stress is the way your body responds to any demand put on it and is a normal part of daily life. It's important to know how stress, good or bad, over a period of time can impact your physical and mental health.

There are physical, psychological and behavioral warning signs when the stress in your life starts to get out of hand. Stay alert to what your body is trying to tell you and practice healthy coping skills when you start feeling any of them.

The following are ways you can help yourself deal with stress:

- **Manage your time; let go of some activities; know your limits**
- **Relax; meditate; balance work with play**
- **Laugh and use humor**
- **Exercise**
- **Take charge of your situation and seek support from family, friend and others**

WARNING SIGNS

Physical	Headaches, rise in blood pressure, rise in blood glucose, drop in blood glucose, sweating, eye spasms, chest pain/tightness, fatigue, digestive problems, dizziness, increase or decrease in weight, insomnia
Psychological	Irritability, easily annoyed, restless, lack of motivation, withdrawn, isolated, anxious, boredom, depression, hopelessness
Behavioral	Forgetful, preoccupied, accident prone, less creative, increase in smoking, missing work days, worried, increased alcohol consumption



ACTION PLAN:

1. What is one tool I could use to track my sodium intake during the day?

2. One diet change I could make to improve my heart health would be?

3. An achievable exercise goal I can set today:

4. What practical steps can I take to help reduce stress in my life?

NOTES