

5 Tips to Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. It is responsible for 1 out of 4 deaths every year. As many as one-third of deaths from heart disease could be prevented if people were to make healthy diet choices and engage in regular physical activity.¹ Follow these tips to help keep your heart healthy and live a longer life.

Follow the Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet is a lot more than Greek food.

- It works as well as, or better than, many of the medicines we use—and it's tastier, too!²
- And, best of all, it may reduce your risk of having a heart attack by as much as 50%.^{3,4}

See *Mediterranean Diet* handout.

Choose whole grains

Whole grains:

- Contain the entire grain.
- Have essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber.
- Help you feel full and help with digestion.

To reduce your risk of heart disease, eat whole grains (4 or more servings/day) instead of processed, refined grains.

This can help decrease the risk of dying from heart disease as much as 50%.^{5,6} See *Whole Grains* handout.

One serving of cooked whole grains = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

On the Nutrition Label

Read the **ingredient list**. If it is a whole grain, the first ingredient listed will be one of these:

- whole grain
- whole wheat
- whole [other grain]
- brown rice
- oats, oatmeal
- wheatberries

Eat vegetables & fruits

Vegetables and fruits are good for you! Over time, your risk of heart disease goes down almost 5% for EACH serving you eat/day. Aim for at least 5 servings/day.⁷

One serving of veggies = 1 cup raw or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked

Your **WHOLE** diet is more important than any of the individual parts. Follow **all 5 tips**.



Skip the sugar

Eating too much sugar can increase your risk of dying from heart disease.⁸

On average, adults in the U.S. consume the equivalent of 88 grams of sugar/day (22 teaspoons). Much of this is from sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.⁸

- Drink water instead of soda.
- Enjoy a piece of fruit for dessert instead of cake or candy.
- Read nutrition labels; avoid foods and drinks that list sugar as a main ingredient. For good heart health, limit sugar from food to the equivalent of less than:
 - 24 grams/day for women (6 tsp)
 - 36 grams/day for men (9 tsp)



Eat healthy fats

Fats are not all created equal! Good fats, like olive oil, help you feel full and help prevent heart disease.⁹ Even as much as a liter of olive oil per week can be part of a heart-healthy diet.⁹

Sources of Healthy Fats



Bad fats, like trans-fats, increase inflammation, clog arteries, and increase risk of heart attack and stroke.¹⁰ Eliminate these fats from your diet. See *Healthy Fats* handout.

ACTION PLAN

Which of the tips will you try? Circle them.

When will you start? _____

How confident are you that you will accomplish your goal (from 0-100%)?

Follow-up plan

References:

¹ CDC MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2014;63(17):369.

² thennt.com.

³ Circulation. 1999;99:779-785.

⁴ The Lancet. Nov 2002; 360.

⁵ Am J Clin Nutr. 2004.

⁶ Am J Clin Nutr. 2006.

⁷ BMJ 2014.

⁸ JAMA Internal Medicine, 2014;DOI:10.001.

⁹ N Engl J Med 2013;368:1279-1290.

¹⁰ Prospective Cohort Study. JACC, 2015.

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