



NUTRITION:

HEART HEALTHY HOW-TO'S

YOU AND YOUR HEART: EATING FOR TWO

Over the span of an average lifetime, our heart beats an estimated 3 billion times. Knowing that it's one of the most vital organs keeping us alive, it's important to treat your heart like the precious commodity it is.

Today, there are a number of ways to impact heart health without medicine or surgery. Research has found that people with favorable lifestyle habits such as not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, engaging in regular physical activity, and eating a healthy diet, lowered their heart disease risk by nearly 50%.

SMALL CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN HEART HEALTH

Here are some of the steps that the nutritional experts at Catholic Health Services of Long Island (CHS) suggest this February, American Heart Month.

Before you begin any diet or exercise program, schedule an appointment with your primary care physician to better understand your family history, blood pressure, blood sugar, heart rate, cholesterol and triglycerides levels.

DIET

According to the American Heart Association, a healthy diet is one of the best weapons you have to fight cardiovascular disease. The food you eat (and the amount) can affect other controllable risk factors: cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

Choose nutrient-rich foods which have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but are lower in calories. Follow a diet that emphasizes intake of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, includes low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, legumes, non-tropical vegetable oils, and nuts, and limits intake of sweets, sugar, sweetened beverages, and red meats. And, for maximum health benefit, coordinate your diet with an exercise plan.

EAT IN

Eating out can make it difficult to judge what you are eating. An order of grilled chicken, for instance, sounds healthy but may have been brined and have a very high sodium level. In restaurants, sodium hides in sauces like salad dressing and gravy, so be sure to ask for sauces on the side. Avoid fast and processed foods as both use salt and sugar as preservatives. When you eat in, you can better plan your meals and control their healthy preparation.

PLAN AHEAD

A big part of eating well is planning ahead. Organize your kitchen and map out a weekly menu so that you buy and prep ingredients to have on-hand for healthy meals. Make lean proteins, vegetables, fresh fruit and whole grains the basis of your shopping list.

HEALTHY FATS

Monounsaturated fats are heart-healthy fats. They can help decrease LDL (bad) cholesterol. Some of the best sources of healthy fats include avocados, olive oil, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish.

DON'T FORGET FIBER

Don't underestimate the importance of fiber in your heart healthy diet. Most adults don't come close to the recommended 25-30 grams a day. Fiber, found in whole grains, legumes, beans, fruits and vegetables (anything with skin) can help lower "bad" LDL cholesterol that can contribute to heart disease. Add fiber gradually to your diet and be sure to drink lots of water to make it easier to digest.

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—American Heart Association

BE LABEL LITERATE

Make it a practice to read labels on the foods you buy, especially the levels of sodium and sugar. Note that sugar can masquerade as high fructose corn syrup, agave nectar, dehydrated cane juice or anything that ends in "ose." Avoid trans fats, too, which may appear on labels as hydrogenated oil. Finally, don't overlook serving size; knowing how much is allotted to a single serving can help manage overeating.

Regardless of where you're at in terms of heart health, you can begin making heart healthy improvements by implementing lifestyle changes today!

Source: Karen Berg, MS, RD, CDN, Registered Dietitian at St. Francis Hospital, Gerard Mure, RD, Registered Dietitian at Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center.

National Center for Biotechnology Information, Wonderpolis, American Heart Association, Dietary Guidelines for Americans.



**Catholic
Health Services**
of Long Island

For a referral to a CHS cardiologist or for more information on cardiology services at St. Francis or Good Samaritan, please call 888-HEART-NY or visit www.chs-hearthealth.org