

How to start eating a Heart Healthy diet

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Heart Disease affects most adults over the age of 60 years old. Forty-eight percent of people over the age of 20 have some type of heart disease such as coronary artery disease, heart failure, stroke, or hypertension as of 2019. Risk factors for heart disease that are non-modifiable (unchangeable) are age, sex, and family history. Women over the age of 55 and men over the age of 45 are more at risk for heart disease, along with being more at risk if you have close relatives (mother, father or siblings) with heart disease at an early age (before age 55 for men and before age 65 for women). Modifiable risk factors (factors you can change) are smoking, diet, exercise, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and obesity. For most patients they either have one or all the risk factors and while changing them can be hard, it is possible. Diet changes can be the hardest changes, but even small changes can help improve your health and wellbeing.

The hardest part to do for most people is cut salt out of their diet. The American diet often uses salt for flavor or as a preservative. Food such as canned soups or vegetables, frozen foods, cold cuts and meats, breads and rolls, and poultry can add high levels of sodium into your diet. Most patients with heart disease should have a goal of eating 1,500- 2,000mg of sodium a day. You should eat 500 mg of sodium per meal and save the rest for snacks throughout the day, equaling 1,500 mg for three meals and an extra 0-500 mg for snacks. Easy ways to decrease your sodium intake is to read labels when grocery shopping, getting rid of table salt and not adding salt when cooking at home.

Reading labels is important to be able to watch your daily sodium intake. All the information of the food label is based on the determined "serving size." You should compare this to how much you are eating to find out how many serving sizes you are eating then find out how much sodium it is per serving. Using the food label as an example: if you eat one serving it is 160mg of sodium and two servings is 320 mg of sodium. It takes practice reading food labels and can feel like it takes you longer when shopping, but it is important to monitor how much sodium are eating with your normal meals!

Small things that you can do slowly can help too. Such are consuming more vegetables and fruits. Including whole grains into your diet, such as oatmeal, brown rice, whole grain pasta or whole grain cereal. Eating healthy fat while avoiding unhealthy fats (such as butter, palm oil, coconut oil and hydrogenated oil) is important. Healthy fats can include unsalted nut, seeds, olive oil, avocados, or nut butters. Eating more beans like black beans, kidney beans or hummus are important and can be added to dishes or snacks. These small changes can happen over weeks to months to help you improve your heart health.

A heart healthy diet can take time to get use to, however making small changes can help such as having a goal to start watching your unhealthy fat intake one week then the next watching your unhealthy fats and adding in how to eat healthy fats. If you are having difficulty with the changes, talk with your primary care doctor about other steps or how to meet with a dietician one on one.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

