

The Newest Nutrition Recommendations to Prevent Heart Disease

The most recent National Lipid Association Recommendations^{1,2} emphasize nutrition habits as a cornerstone to prevent heart disease. Healthy eating habits can help you reach your cholesterol and triglyceride goals. They can also help you lose excess body fat, improve your blood pressure, manage blood sugar levels, and prevent future heart disease problems, if you already have heart disease.



Dairy or Dairy Alternatives

Choose fat-free or 1% milk products or calcium-fortified soy milk.

Tips for Planning Heart-Healthy Meals

Use a 9-inch plate to help with portion control.

Fill ½ your plate with non-starchy vegetables of a variety of colors.

- Vegetables are low-calorie nutrient powerhouses.
- Eating more vegetables helps you feel full and supports healthy weight.
- Many vegetables are good sources of soluble fiber like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and kale.

Fill ¼ of your plate with lean meat or plant protein sources.

- Choose lean protein foods, like fish, poultry without skin, lean cuts of red meat, or plant-based protein like soy or legumes (lentils, split peas, and black, kidney, and pinto beans), to reduce your intake of saturated fat.
 - Eat seafood, especially oily fish, at least two times a week.
 - Lean protein foods help you feel full, which can help you maintain a healthy weight.

Fill ¼ of your plate with whole grains or starchy vegetables.

- Include at least 3 servings each day of whole grains like oats, whole-wheat breads, quinoa, and brown rice.
- Starchy vegetables include green peas and legumes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, and winter squash.
- Keep portions to 1/3 - 1/2 cup.
- Sweet potatoes, legumes like pinto beans and lentils, and grains like oats and barley are high in soluble fiber.

Choose healthy cooking methods like grilling, baking, or broiling.

Fruit

- Choose whole fruit instead of juice, especially if your triglycerides are high.
- Apples, apricots, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, and strawberries are high in soluble fiber.



Accent Your Meals with Heart-Healthy Fats

- Use vegetable oils in cooking like canola, corn, olive, and safflower.
- Include a small handful of nuts 4 times a week.
- Avocados have healthy fats and are a good source of soluble fiber.



Flavor Your Food with Herbs and Spices to Reduce the Need for Salt

- Many herbs and spices have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and may help prevent some diseases.



Beverages

- Choose water as your main beverage throughout the day.
- Moderate amounts of coffee or unsweetened tea are acceptable.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages and fruit juice, or avoid these drinks completely, if you have high triglycerides or want to lose weight.



Heart-Healthy Nutrition Recommendations

- Choose an eating plan that has a variety of plant foods and lean protein, low-fat dairy products, and healthy fats. Your overall eating pattern is more important than any single food or nutrient
- To lower your low-density lipoprotein cholesterol:
 - Reduce your intake of saturated fat by eating lean meats and low-fat dairy products. Replace foods high in saturated fat like butter and coconut oil with foods high in healthy fats like non-tropical vegetable oils (canola, corn, olive, safflower), avocados, and nuts and seeds. Avoid foods with trans fat, which is listed as "partially hydrogenated oil" on the ingredient list.
 - Limit your cholesterol intake to <200 mg per day by limiting egg yolks to 2-4 a week and avoiding organ meats like liver and gizzards. A careful review of the scientific research reinforced the importance of limiting dietary cholesterol for individuals at risk for heart disease.
 - Eat more foods rich in soluble fiber like legumes, fruits, vegetables, and certain whole grains.
 - Eat more foods rich in plant stanols and sterols like vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, and grain foods, or try adding 2 grams of plant stanols or sterols a day in fortified products or supplements.
- Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages and reduce your intake of sugary foods to help lower your triglyceride level and achieve a healthy weight.
- If you drink alcohol, women should have 7 or fewer drinks per week and men should have 14 or fewer drinks per week; limit to one to two drinks in a day.
- Eat mindfully. Balance your food intake with your physical activity to reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- A registered dietitian nutritionist can help make a heart-healthy eating plan that works for you.

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References

1. Jacobson TA, Ito MK, Maki KC, et al. National Lipid Association recommendations for patient-centered management of dyslipidemia: part 1 – full report. *J Clin Lipidol.* 2015;9:129-69.
2. (In press). National Lipid Association recommendations for patient-centered management of dyslipidemia: part 2. *J Clin Lipidol.* 2015.