

HEART-HEALTHY COOKING TIPS

To lower your risk of heart disease or to manage your existing disease, try these tips in preparing meals:

LIMIT FAT, ESPECIALLY SATURATED AND TRANS FAT

- Select lean cuts of beef and pork, especially cuts with “loin” or “round” in their name.
- Remove all visible fat from meat before cooking. Take the skin off chicken or turkey before eating it.
- Cut back on processed meats high in saturated fat, such as hot dogs, salami and bacon.
- Bake, broil, roast, stew or stir-fry lean meats, fish or poultry.
- Drain the fat off of cooked, ground meat.
- When you make a stew, soup or gravy, refrigerate leftovers and skim off the fat with a spoon before reheating and serving.
- Eat fish regularly. Try different ways of cooking like baking, broiling, grilling and poaching to add variety.
- Eat plant foods as sources of protein, including soybeans, pinto beans, lentils and nuts.
- Replace higher-fat cheeses with lower-fat options like reduced-fat feta and part-skim mozzarella.
- Thicken sauces with evaporated non-fat milk instead of whole milk.
- Move toward using lower-fat milk and yogurt. Start with 2 percent products, then move to 1 percent and finally to fat-free to adjust to the new taste.
- Use liquid vegetable oils and soft margarine instead of stick margarine or shortening.

- Limit consumption of cakes, cookies, crackers, pastries, pies, muffins, doughnuts and french fries. These foods tend to be the biggest sources of trans fats. Many food manufacturers have removed trans fats from their foods. Check ingredient lists on food packages and avoid products containing partially hydrogenated oils.
- Use non-stick spray or a nonstick pan for cooking. Try broth as a substitute for oil when sautéing foods.
- Use oils such as canola, olive and soybean in recipes and for sautéing.
- Make salad dressings with olive, walnut or pecan oil.

EAT FOODS CONTAINING OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

- Select oils that provide omega-3 fat, such as canola or soybean oil.
- Add flaxseed oil, which is very high in omega-3 fat, to foods like salad dressings. If you use flaxseed, be sure it is ground up. Your body cannot digest the beneficial fat if the seeds are left whole.
- The walnut is the only common nut with alpha linolenic acid. Try walnut oil in salad dressings, too.
- Eat two 4-ounce portions of fatty fish each week, like salmon, albacore tuna (in water, if canned), mackerel and sardines.
- Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will contain more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label. Remember all egg yolks contain cholesterol.

- Fish oil supplements are acceptable for those with heart disease. The recommended dose is 1 gram of omega-3 fatty acids from a combination of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) per day.

REDUCE SALT (SODIUM)

- Prepare foods at home so you can control the amount of salt in your meals.
- Use as little salt in cooking as possible. You can cut half the salt from most recipes.
- Do not salt food at the table.
- Do not use mixes or “instant” products that already contain salt or additives with sodium.
- Select no-sodium or low-sodium canned foods, such as vegetables or tuna.
- Add herbs in place of salt when cooking.
- Season foods with herbs, spices, garlic, onions, peppers and lemon or lime juice to add flavor.

MAKE HEALTHIER CARBOHYDRATE CHOICES

- When baking, use recipes that call for whole grains and flours made from whole grains.
- Reduce the amount of sugar in recipes. It can often be cut in half.
- Instead of sugar, use noncaloric sweeteners in drinks and sucralose when baking.
- Stir-fry fiber-rich vegetables, such as peppers, cabbage, broccoli and carrots.
- Add dried beans and lentils to home-made soup.