

# Top Twelve Nutrition Strategies to Heart Health

- 1) **Don't Run on Empty** – Eat 3 small meals and 2 power snacks each day to keep from overeating at mealtimes. Snacking on healthy foods such as fruits, raw veggies, natural peanut butter or small amounts of nuts can help you lose weight by keeping your hunger in control.
- 2) **Choose Foods Naturally High in Fiber** – Eating foods naturally high in fiber, especially soluble fiber helps lower cholesterol and creates a feeling of fullness so you consume fewer calories. Soluble fiber is found in beans, fruits, vegetables, oats, barley and flaxseeds. Increase fiber to 25-38 grams per day.
- 3) **Choose Low-Fat Dairy Products** – Full-fat dairy products are high in saturated fat, which will increase LDL-cholesterol (bad cholesterol). Low-fat dairy products such as skim milk, low-fat cheese and low-fat yogurt are a better choice. Low-fat dairy products are high in calcium, which is great for your bones and can help regulate blood pressure. Choose 3 cups of low-fat dairy products per day.
- 4) **Choose Foods High in Omega-3 Fats** – Omega-3 fats have been shown to help lower blood pressure, lower triglycerides, promote healthy blood clotting, and prevent life-threatening arrhythmias. Foods such as fatty fish (salmon, tuna, and sardines), eggs labeled high in omega-3, soy foods, walnuts, canola oil, and ground flaxseeds are all excellent sources of omega-3s. Increase omega-3 fats to 2 grams per day.
- 5) **Choose Foods High in Monounsaturated Fats** – Foods such as olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, natural peanut butter, unsalted nuts, and avocados are rich in monounsaturated fats. These fats can help lower LDL-cholesterol and may help raise HDL-cholesterol (good cholesterol). Remember that all fats are high in calories, so choose healthy fats in moderation.
- 6) **Limit Saturated Fats** – Saturated fats are found in full-fat dairy products, meats, poultry skin, lard, and tropical oils (coconut, palm and palm-kernel oils). Not only can saturated fat raise your LDL-cholesterol, it can lower your HDL-cholesterol and is attributed to some cancers. Limit saturated fat intake to 12-15 grams per day.
- 7) **Avoid Trans Fats** – Trans fats are found in foods with “partially hydrogenated oils” in the ingredient list. Many snack foods, crackers, baked goods and fried foods contain trans fats. These fats will raise your LDL-cholesterol, lower your HDL-cholesterol, and may cause other health problems. Keep your intake of this fat as close to 0 grams per day as much as possible.
- 8) **Use Products Containing Sterols and Stanols** – Plant sterols block dietary cholesterol absorption in the small intestine, thus reducing total blood cholesterol. Plant sterols can lower LDL-cholesterol by up to 14%. Food sources include fortified margarine-type spreads and orange juice, rice milk, granola bars, supplements, almonds and avocados. Consume 2 grams plant sterols per day to lower cholesterol.
- 9) **Choose Soy** – Soy protein can help to lower cholesterol and is a good replacement for protein foods high in saturated fats. Start with soy milk, soy nuts, or soy based meat alternatives such as Boca Burgers or Morningstar Farms products.
- 10) **Choose Low-Sodium** – Foods high in sodium will raise blood pressure and contribute to fluid retention. Look for low-sodium versions of your favorite canned vegetables, soups, broths, vegetable juices and snack foods. Daily goal for sodium is 2000 mg or less per day.
- 11) **Limit Sugar** – Sugar provides calories, but has no other nutrients. These “empty calories” can raise your blood sugar quickly leading to a relatively quick blood sugar “crash” causing you to want to eat again sooner. This cycle can lead to weight gain and an increase in triglyceride levels. Limit sweets and desserts to less than 200 calories per day, avoid sweetened beverages and limit use of added sugar.
- 12) **Get Moving!** – To help raise your HDL-cholesterol, lower blood pressure, regulate blood sugar and control weight, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. If you can carry on a conversation while doing your chosen activity, you are performing moderate physical activity. A good plan would be to walk at least 2-3 miles per day, 5-6 days per week.