

# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO HEART HEALTH

**100**  
Effective  
Prevention  
Tips

**PROVEN  
WAYS TO  
LOWER RISK**

**RECOGNIZE  
WARNING  
SIGNS**

**THE  
STRESS  
EFFECT**

**WHAT  
WOMEN  
NEED  
TO KNOW**



**PLUS**

**THE #1 THING  
YOU CAN DO TO  
STAY HEALTHY**

CENTENNIAL HEALTH



Display Until 12/23/19 \$13.99

# Best Diets for Heart Health

BALANCING YOUR NUTRITION NEEDS CAN REDUCE YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE WHILE HELPING YOU MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT.

BY Diana Kelly Levey

**F**or years, scientists were convinced that banning most dietary fats was the key to curbing cholesterol and keeping the heart healthy. But recently, it's been recognized that certain fats (including monounsaturated fats like olive oil and polyunsaturated fats like omega-3 fatty acids) are actually beneficial to keeping your circulation and heart strong.

"A low-fat diet is not considered part of the heart-healthy diet today," notes Susan Ryskamp, MS, RDN, a dietitian at Michigan Medicine's Frankel Cardiovascular Center in Ann Arbor. "We encourage plant-based fats, like monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats, and that people reduce their intake of saturated fats and eliminate trans fats."

### **Heart-Healthy Eating**

Although numerous diets claim to be good for your heart (and any weight loss can help reduce some of the more significant risk factors for heart disease, including diabetes and elevated cholesterol), scientific evidence is pickier about what really helps.

"There are only two diets that are supported by the literature as having an impact with respect to decreasing the risk of having cardiovascular issues," says Michael Goyfman, MD, director of clinical cardiology at Northwell Health's Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens, New York. "Those are the DASH Diet [Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension] and the Mediterranean. They're the ones to show sustained impact on health after more than a year." (Read more about the DASH diet on page 84.)

The Mediterranean diet, in particular, is beloved by nutrition



**5 a Day**

Recommended servings of fruits and vegetables to lower risk of heart attack and stroke.

experts and cardiologists alike for its ability to improve cardiovascular health and reduce the risk of heart disease. Consider a randomized trial published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2018 that followed over 7,000 participants who were at high cardiovascular risk. After following up with them nearly five years later, participants who followed a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil or nuts had fewer strokes, heart attacks and death than those assigned to a reduced-fat diet. And because this diet has a wide range of appetizing fare, including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fish and nuts, it's easy to follow, Goyfman adds.

Other experts also recommend emphasizing a largely vegetarian diet when it comes to reducing heart disease risk, one that is made up of at least 50 percent plant foods, which include fruits,

## Losing just 10 percent of your body weight can curb your risk of heart disease.

vegetables, whole grains, beans and nuts. "A plant-based diet can be either vegan, vegetarian or Mediterranean," explains Lisa Stollman, MA, RDN, a nutritionist based out of Greenlawn, New York. "Plant foods are heart-healthy because they are low in saturated fats and contain many phytonutrients, such as lycopene and resveratrol, which are important for heart health."

Another benefit of plant foods: They can help decrease inflammation in the body, reducing the risk for diabetes, heart disease and many types of cancer, says Stollman.

### Facts About Fat

Gone are the days when fat was considered the enemy of heart health. But not all fats are created equal, and more isn't necessarily better, even among so-called healthy fats. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends 30 percent of your diet come from fats, which for a 2,000-calorie diet would be 70 grams of fat per day, or roughly 4 tablespoons.

The AHA does not recommend large amounts of saturated fats (like those from animal products), maintaining that a diet high in saturated fats can boost total cholesterol and increase levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Saturated fats are also pro-inflammatory. "It's becoming increasingly clear that chronic inflammation is a root cause of heart disease, as well as many cancers and possibly Alzheimer's disease," says Ryskamp.

### How 4 Popular Diets Stack Up

Each year, about 45 million Americans go on a diet. If you're thinking about following a formal weight-loss plan, consider how the following choices can affect your heart health.

#### 1 Keto

The jury is still out on this popular high-fat plan, but if you choose healthy, unprocessed foods and plant-based fats, like avocado and healthy oils, keto can benefit heart health, says Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, a dietitian based in Hamburg, New Jersey.

Some small studies on the keto diet, like a 2017 one published in the journal *Nutrients*, found that it can improve good cholesterol numbers while also lowering blood sugar, both of which can have a beneficial impact on heart disease.

#### 2 Atkins

This is a low-carb diet that promotes high-fat eating, without needing to monitor saturated fat intake or measure portions. If you're following this diet and eating a large amount of animal fats, it could increase your risk of heart disease and some cancers.

Like keto, if you follow it by focusing on plant-based fats and nutritious foods, it can be healthy for your heart.

#### 3 Paleo

This "caveman" diet focuses on getting protein from mostly lean (grass-fed) meats, poultry, fish, nuts and seeds as well as eating plenty of fruits and vegetables and eliminating processed foods. Some studies suggest the benefits of eating this way could lead to better blood pressure control, lower triglycerides and weight loss, all of which can be good for your heart. One downside: Whole grains, which contain lots of cholesterol-lowering fiber, aren't allowed on this plan.

#### 4 Weight Watchers (WW)

WW promotes an initial goal of losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight by eating a variety of healthy whole foods plus exercising. Losing just 5 percent can help lower cholesterol and decrease your risk of sudden cardiac death or stroke. Plus, this is an easy plan to stick with for the long run—no foods are off-limits.



**20%**  
Reduced risk of heart disease for those who ate 5 servings or more of produce a day.

the most protein from animal sources had a 43 percent increased risk of heart failure compared to those who had the least amount of protein; those who consumed high protein from dairy sources had a 49 percent increased risk. That's not to say you can never enjoy red meat—just limit your servings to one or two a week. "If you're limiting your red meat to a serving or two a week and eating very healthy the rest of the time, it's okay to enjoy a burger or steak once in a while," says Goyfman. Whenever possible, choose lean cuts of red meat labeled "round," "loin" or "sirloin" on the package or a menu. And keep an eye on serving size: A portion of red meat is about 3 ounces, the size of a computer mouse.

### Choosing Carbs

Just like fat and protein, some carbs are a lot better for your heart health than others. Getting the green light: Carbs that are high in dietary fiber, such as whole grains, which can help improve cholesterol levels and lower risk of stroke. The Nurses' Health Study found that women who ate two to three servings of whole grains a day were 30 percent less likely to have a heart attack or die from heart disease over a 10-year period compared to women who ate less than one serving of whole grains per week. And a meta-analysis of seven major studies found that cardiovascular disease was 21 percent less likely to occur in subjects who ate two-and-a-half-or-more servings of whole grains a week compared to those who ate less than two servings a week.

Vegetables and fruits can also play an important role in helping your heart. "The more colors you have, the more nutrient-rich your diet is," says Ryskamp. "With different fruits, vegetables and legumes, you'll get a variety of important nutrients that will ultimately benefit your health."

And while some research has concluded there isn't enough evidence that saturated fat directly increases the risk of heart disease, it can help to replace saturated fat with polyunsaturated fats, like those from vegetables and other plant or monounsaturated fats.

On the "good" fats list are ones like monounsaturated plant-based fats like olive oil, canola, avocados, nuts and seeds. Fatty fish, like salmon, are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which can decrease triglyceride levels, slow plaque growth and help lower blood pressure. Just remember that more isn't always better, even with healthy fats. "If

you eat too many nuts or go crazy with the olive oil, it's still fattening," notes Goyfman. "Too much of a good thing can become a bad thing."

### Protein Precautions

A high-protein diet may be all the rage as a way to lose weight but it's not always the best plan to follow, especially if you are worried about your heart health. Research has shown that those who consume a high-protein diet may increase their risk of heart disease. One Finnish study found that men who followed a high-protein eating plan increased their risk of developing heart failure by 33 percent. Those who ate