5 Tips to Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. It is responsible for 1 out of 4 deaths every year. As many as one-third of deaths from heart disease could be prevented if people were to make healthy diet choices and engage in regular physical activity. Follow these tips to help keep your heart healthy and live a longer life.

Follow the Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet is a lot more than Greek food.
- It works as well as, or better than, many of the medicines we use—and it’s tastier, too!2
- And, best of all, it may reduce your risk of having a heart attack by as much as 50%.3,4

See Mediterranean Diet handout.

Choose whole grains

Whole grains:
- Contain the entire grain.
- Have essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber.
- Help you feel full and help with digestion.

To reduce your risk of heart disease, eat whole grains (4 or more servings/day) instead of processed, refined grains. This can help decrease the risk of dying from heart disease as much as 50%.5,6

See Whole Grains handout.

On the Nutrition Label

Read the ingredient list. If it is a whole grain, the first ingredient listed will be one of these:
- whole grain
- brown rice
- whole wheat
- oats, oatmeal
- whole [other grain]
- wheatberries

Eat vegetables & fruits

Vegetables and fruits are good for you! Over time, your risk of heart disease goes down almost 5% for EACH serving you eat/day. Aim for at least 5 servings/day.7

One serving of veggies = 1 cup raw \( \text{or} \) \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup cooked

Eat healthy fats

Fats are not all created equal! Good fats, like olive oil, help you feel full and help prevent heart disease.9 Even as much as 1 liter of olive oil per week can be part of a heart-healthy diet.9

Sources of Healthy Fats

Bad fats, like trans-fats, increase inflammation, clog arteries, and increase risk of heart attack and stroke.10

Eliminate these fats from your diet. See Healthy Fats handout.

ACTION PLAN

Which of the tips will you try? Circle them.

When will you start? _______

How confident are you that you will accomplish your goal (from 0-100%)?

Follow-up plan

References:

6 BMJ 2014.
7 JAMA Internal Medicine, 2014;J00:10.101.
10 BMJ 2014.

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