



## Eating for Heart Health

Diet plays a crucial role in correcting high blood fat levels as well as combating obesity, hypertension, high blood-sugar, diabetes and raised homocysteine levels.

Eating more fruit and veggies, exercising and limiting your alcohol and salt intake can all help to lower your heart risk.

Dietary changes can make a big difference and help you avoid ill health and heart disease, and a healthy, long life.

Below, we provide information about a healthy diet aimed at boosting heart health.

### Basic Diet to Prevent Heart Disease

The basic dietary changes you need to make to either prevent heart disease from developing or keeping it under control, boils down to decreasing the total amount of unhealthy fats in your diet. To eat less saturated fat and trans-fatty acids, you need to use the following strategies:

- **Buy only low-fat or skim milk, cottage cheese and yoghurt.** People with raised blood fat levels often believe that they should cut out milk and dairy products completely - this is not a good idea because you still need the calcium, riboflavin and other protective nutrients found in milk and dairy. You just don't need the saturated fat. Calcium is one of the most important nutrients to prevent osteoporosis and high blood pressure, so use milk and dairy products every day, but select the low-fat or skim varieties.
- **Buy cheeses with a lower fat content** such as ricotta, mozzarella, Camembert and brie and keep a lookout for reduced-fat cheeses. Eat low-fat cheese in moderation.
- **Buy only lean meat and trim all the visible fat off meat cuts.** Venison has a much lower fat content than commercial beef and lamb. Modern-day pork is one of the lowest-fat meats available, provided you carefully cut off the fat layer. Turkey contains less fat than poultry such as duck and even chicken. Removing the skin from chicken reduces the fat content considerably. Eat meat in small portions and eat red meat only 1-2 times a week - substitute red meat with fish, ostrich, chicken and meat-less dishes.
- **The way you prepare meat can also decrease the fat content considerably** - grilling and frying in a non-stick pan with little or no oil (use Spray and Cook to coat the pan) will save plenty of fat. You can also boil or stew meat dishes (potjie) the day before serving. Let the stew cool completely and remove the layer of fat that collects on top of the liquid. When you roast meat, use very little oil (preferably olive or canola oil) to coat the bottom of the container, cook the meat at a lower temperature and when the roast is done, drain off all the fat that has collected in the bottom of the pan and get rid of it. Keep a large bottle handy in the kitchen to collect this fat that oozes out of roasts and throw it away on a regular basis. This

not only prevents the drains from getting clogged up but spares the arteries of your family from a similar fate!

- **Eat fish regularly**, at least three to four times a week. Studies have shown that people, who eat fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel at two or more meals a week, have a considerably reduced incidence of heart disease. This beneficial effect is believed to be due to the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish that protect the heart and blood vessels. Apply the above-mentioned practices when cooking fish so that you don't add too much fat or oil. Use herbs, lemon juice, freshly ground black pepper, dry white wine, or tomato to give fish dishes added flavour without the fat.
- **Cut your intake of trans-fatty acids**, which are produced when liquid vegetable oils are converted to semi-solid fats during the production of certain types of margarine and commercial baking products. Researchers believe that these fatty acids could harm the heart. Avoid hard brick margarine (and products that may contain it, such as home-industry cakes and cookies), as well as crisps, crackers, pastries and take-away meals. Opt for soft tub margarines that display the Heart Mark for use in your home.
- Most people believe that eating eggs is a total no-no when you have raised blood fats and heart problems. But, in recent years, the attitude of scientists has changed in relation to the role of eggs in the diet. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of South Africa states that **eating four eggs a week is perfectly acceptable** and international researchers have identified that the cholesterol found in eggs is not the biggest culprit in heart disease. Total and saturated fat intake play a much more harmful role. Another important development is the fact that omega-3-enriched eggs are now available in South Africa. The enriched eggs have the same benefits as eating fish because they also contain omega-3 fatty acids, which protect the heart and lower blood fat levels. Remember to cook eggs with as little added fat as possible. Rather poach, boil, microwave, scramble with low-fat milk, or fry in Spray and Cook in a non-stick pan.
- **Eat more frequently, but keep your meals small**. A British study found that people who ate five or six times a day had five percent lower total cholesterol and LDL ("bad") cholesterol than people who ate once or twice a day.

A diet with less total fat not only lowers the risk of heart disease, but also helps combat obesity and control diabetes

### **Should We Be Eating More Chocolate?**

Chocolate may indeed be just what the doctor ordered. More and more research is pointing to its positive effects - particularly on the heart, in moderation.

### **Go Green for Healthy Blood Pressure and Supplement Your Diet**

As fruit and vegetables contain the right combination of sodium and potassium, they're the ideal food for keeping your blood pressure at a healthy level. Also, researchers have found that people using magnesium supplements have lower blood pressure, "safer" blood cholesterol levels and a lower risk for heart disease. Another local winner is rooibos tea. Research shows that the beverage could curb heart disease.

**Source: Kaelo / Health24.com**