



Protect Your Heart

You can't change your genes but you can change your lifestyle. What you eat and drink can make a difference in your cholesterol and triglyceride levels, blood pressure, blood sugar, and chronic inflammation – all factors that can contribute to heart disease.

To Protect Your Heart:

- **Eat lots of bright-colored and strongly flavored vegetables and fruit.**
Especially: dark green leafy vegetables, all broccoli, garlic and onion family vegetables, squashes, yams and sweet potatoes, berries, citrus fruits and tomatoes.
What You Get: Fiber, vitamins A, C and E, potassium, folate and other B vitamins, and "good" carbs. Also, a variety of phytonutrients that can lower "bad" cholesterol and blood pressure, keep chronic inflammation at bay and act as anti-oxidants.
- **Make at least half of your grains each day whole grains.**
Especially: Oats & barley to lower "bad" cholesterol. Limit refined grains (white flour, sugars) even more to lower triglycerides. Look for at least 3 grams of fiber per slice of bread or other grain serving and 5 grams or more in servings of packaged cereals.
What You Get: Fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E, magnesium, potassium, zinc, iron, and many other minerals, phytonutrients. Many whole grains are also prebiotics that feed probiotics (the "good" gut bacteria). You also get "good" carbs and plant protein.
- **Eat fish for omega-3 fats at least twice each week.**
Especially: Wild-caught salmon, tuna (light), sardines, herring, mackerel, lake trout.

Also include plants high in omega-3 fats.

Especially: Ground flaxseed, flax oil, walnuts, organic* canola oil, hempseeds, pumpkin seeds, organic soybeans* and foods made from them. (*Choose organic to avoid GMOs)

- **Eat 3 cups (or more) of beans, dried peas or lentils each week (or foods made from them).**

What You Get: Fiber, B vitamins, potassium, iron, zinc, copper, magnesium, and other minerals, omega-3 fats (soybeans), a variety of phytonutrients including plant sterols and stanols that can help lower cholesterol.

Note: if you don't eat beans often start slowly to allow your body to adjust. Soups are a great way to ease into eating more beans. Drink extra water to help with the extra fiber.

- **Eat a variety of nuts and seeds. Each variety has important nutrients for your heart.**

Especially: walnuts, almonds, Brazil nuts, flaxseed, hempseeds (non-psychoactive kind), pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds.

What You Get: "good" fat, protein, fiber, potassium, magnesium, vitamins K & E, selenium, iron, zinc, and other minerals. Also omega-3 fats (walnuts, flax, hemp and pumpkin seeds) and many beneficial phytonutrients.

- **Eat mostly the "good" fats (olive oil, fish, nuts, seeds, and avocados).**

Limit saturated fat from animal foods and tropical oils (meat, cheese, full-fat dairy foods, palm kernel oil).

Avoid trans fat (partially hydrogenated oils) added to foods (fried foods and many processed, packaged foods).

Note: if you have high cholesterol the AHA recommends limiting cholesterol from food to no more than 200 mg/day (1 egg yolk has 212 mg).

- **Limit salty foods.**

Most of the excess sodium we get is not from the salt shaker but from restaurant and processed foods. Learn to use herbs and spices to flavor foods with less salt at home and read the packages of foods you buy. Aim for less than 2,400 mg/day of sodium (1,500 or less if you have high blood pressure or a family history of this condition).

- **Drink alcohol – including red wine, only in moderation.**

While there are some heart benefits with moderate alcohol consumption, especially red wine, there may be other health risks (breast & other cancers, high blood pressure, blood sugar imbalances). Moderation is considered no more than one drink (12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine, 1 ½ oz. spirits) per day for women and two or less for men.

Remember your overall diet that matters most so don't get hung up on every detail. Try your best to eat well most of the time and enjoy your food always.