

Tips to Take Care of Your Heart and Brain

You may be concerned about cardiovascular disease because of a family member's health issues and/or you've recently learned that you have high cholesterol or high triglycerides or high blood sugar. Here are some ideas for protecting yourself from heart disease and stroke, and keeping your body strong and energized.

Burning Questions!

Below are the questions that you should be asking in order to protect your body. It's more than simply lowering your cholesterol. We now know that people can have cardiovascular disease (CVD) with "normal" cholesterol levels, whereas others can have very high cholesterol levels yet never experience complications from CVD. The missing connection is inflammation. Cholesterol is important, but this handout will target more than simply lowering cholesterol levels by guiding you toward an anti-inflammatory diet.

What lowers "bad" LDL-cholesterol?

- Soluble fiber-found in beans, lentils, sweet potatoes, berries, oatmeal and apples
- Plant stanols-found in beans, lentils, almonds, specially fortified foods, and supplements
- Healthy fats and oils-found in nuts, seeds, olive and canola oils, olives and avocados.
- Exercise



What increases "bad" LDL-cholesterol?

- Animal fats-(aka "saturated fats") found in meat, poultry skin, cheese, butter, ice cream, whole milk, and palm oil. These fats are solid at room temperature, like butter and cheese.

What makes LDL-cholesterol "stick" to blood vessel and artery walls and cause heart disease?

Inflammation-related damage to vessel walls. These foods and lifestyle factors increase inflammation in your body:

- Inflammatory foods-sugar, refined flour, animal fats, hydrogenated oils (trans fats and fried foods), and soy, sunflower, corn and cottonseed oils
- Stress
- Smoking
- Excessively drinking alcohol

What prevents LDL-cholesterol from "sticking" to blood vessels and arteries in your body?

- Anti-inflammatory foods-vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, spices, herbs, and oily fish
- Omega 3 fats-these are found in oily fish and flaxseeds. Ask your Nutrition Counselor if you need to supplement your diet with an omega-3 fatty acid supplements.
- Exercise

What protects your body from the damages of high cholesterol?

- Antioxidants-found in vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils and whole grains
- Anti-inflammatory foods-vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, spices, herbs, and oily fish
- Exercise
- Stress management

Use the checklist on the next page to identify areas of your life that you need to work on to protect your heart and brain.



Do This...

- Exercise** nearly every day for at least 30 minutes.
- Eat **vegetables and fruits** with every meal and snack.
- Look a variety of **colors** from vegetables and fruits on your plate!
- Eat **beans or lentils** nearly every day for a fiber boost.
- Choose **unprocessed carbohydrate** rich foods like, brown rice, sweet potatoes, oatmeal and beans instead of pasta, bread, crackers and other flour based foods.
- Look for **whole grain** cereals with >3 grams fiber and <6 grams sugar per 100 calories.
- Eat **nuts & seeds**, like pistachios, walnuts, almonds, and pecans, pumpkin seeds and nut butters, every day.
- Choose **“healthy” fat**-rich foods such as olive oil, canola oil, nuts, seeds, olives, and avocado regularly.
- Eat **fish** once or twice a week. Emphasize oily fish like salmon, tuna, sardines, or herring.
- Consider taking a **fish oil supplement**.
- Consider taking a **plant stanol supplement**.
- Choose **small portions** of food and eat **more often** rather than eating larger meals less frequently.
- Use **herbs, spices**, lemon, vinegars, onions and garlic instead of salt to flavor foods.
- RELAX!**
- Get enough **sleep**.

Other Tips Just For You:

Not That!

Eat **LESS** of these foods:

- Sugar and flour** from: candy and sweets, pastries, cookies, ice cream, and refined-grain breads, pastas, crackers, and baked goods.
- Don't drink sugar. Avoid **soda, energy drinks or fruit drinks**.
- Animal fats**.
 - Eat less meat, poultry skin, cheese, butter, high fat milk and yogurt, and ice cream.
- Hydrogenated fats**.
 - Avoid fried foods.
 - Choose packaged foods that do not contain hydrogenated oils.
- Inflammatory oils**.
 - Avoid “vegetable”, corn, soy, sunflower, and cottonseed, oils.
 - Choose packaged foods, salad dressings, and mayonnaise that do not contain these oils.
- Alcohol**. Limit to 1-2 servings or less daily.
- DON'T SMOKE!** Smoking is one of the worst habits for your heart, and your entire body. It not only increases the risk for heart disease but it dramatically increases your risk of actually having a attack or stroke.