

Heart Disease, Part II

Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in women. There are several ways to help prevent heart disease:

Maintain a Healthy Weight

What is considered a healthy weight varies from person to person, but having a normal body mass index (BMI) is helpful. This calculation helps you see if you have a healthy or unhealthy percentage of body fat. A BMI of 25 or higher can be associated with increased risk of heart disease. Losing weight to maintain a healthy BMI can help lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes and can help lower blood pressure. To calculate your exact BMI, multiply your weight in pounds by 703. Then divide by your height in inches, and then divide by your height in inches again.

Here is the formula:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Weight in Pounds}}{(\text{height in inches} \times \text{height in inches})} \right) \times 703 = \text{BMI}$$

Limit Unhealthy Fat and Cholesterol to Include a Heart-Healthy Diet

The American Heart Association offers these guidelines of how much fat and cholesterol to include in your heart-healthy diet:

| TYPES OF FAT | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------------------|---|
| Saturated Fat: | Less than 7 percent of your total daily calories |
| Trans Fat: | Less than 1 percent of your total daily calories |
| Cholesterol: | Less than 300 milligrams a day for healthy Adults. Less than 200 milligrams a day for adults with high levels of Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad” cholesterol or those who are taking cholesterol-lowering medication. |

Eat fish, if possible, twice a week. Recent research shows that eating oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout, herring) may help lower your risk of heart disease. Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without using additional oil.

To help maintain a healthy weight, try to use skim milk instead of higher fat dairy products.

Eat more Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals; they are low in calories and rich in dietary fiber. Vegetables and fruits contain substances found in plants that may help prevent cardiovascular disease. Eating more vegetables and fruits also helps you avoid high calorie less nutrient rich foods.

Try and keep vegetables in the refrigerator already prepared for you to have a quick snack. Put fruit in a bowl ready to eat if hunger begins. Try and stay away from fruit that is packaged in a heavy syrup. Avoid vegetables that are fried and prepared in cream sauces.

Choose Whole Grains

Whole grains are good sources of fiber. Whole grains are a better choice in a heart-healthy diet. However, avoid refined flour.

Another way to add whole grains is by adding ground flaxseed. Flaxseeds are small brown seeds that are high in fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. You can add a teaspoon in your yogurt or hot cereal.

Other Ideas

Planning daily menus helps avoid expense and eating foods that are not heart-healthy. Some people find cooking several dishes in one day and storing them in the freezer is helpful during busy schedules.

- *Jennifer Anderson*, Budge OB/GYN Nurse Practitioner