

# Food for the Heart

*Eating well is an excellent way to help protect your heart. More than one third of Americans have either cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure, or both. Having a healthy diet and lifestyle helps reduce the chance of developing those deadly diseases.*

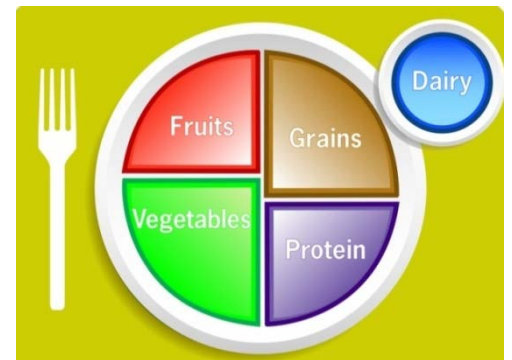


It's important to eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods. Guidelines for heart health urge people to eat a diet that emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and includes low-fat dairy, poultry, fish, legumes, non-tropical vegetable oils and nuts. Experts also advise that people limit sodium, sweets, sugary beverages and red meats.

Here are some suggestions for putting these recommendations into practice:

## Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fiber

- Aim to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Your vegetables can be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned or dried; whole, cut-up or mashed.
- Your fruits can be fresh, canned, frozen or dried; whole, cut-up or pureed.
- Make at least half your grains whole for more fiber and nutrients. Eat less refined grains.



## Lean meats, poultry, fish, dairy

- With poultry, choose light meat over dark meat. Light meat is leaner. Either way, don't forget to take off the skin.
- Eat fish or shellfish at least twice a week. Salmon, trout, oysters and herring are good choices (high in healthy omega-3 fatty acids and lower in mercury).
- Use fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt.

## Oils and healthy fats

- Limit your intake of saturated fats. Experts suggest people aim for an eating pattern where 5 percent to 6 percent of calories come from saturated fats. Saturated fats are in red meat, bacon, poultry skin, butter and high-fat dairy.
- Lower the percentage of calories that you get from trans fats. Trans fats can be synthetic or natural. Synthetic trans fats are found in partially hydrogenated oils used in some margarines, snack foods and prepared desserts. Natural trans fats are found in meat and milk products.

Eating plans like the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) dietary pattern, the American Heart Association diet or the U.S. Department of Agriculture food pattern all fit the bill. The USDA food pattern offers options for people who are lacto-ovo vegetarian or vegan.

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### SOURCES:

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