Aging Healthfully
Newsletter
Illinois Department on Aging

February is American Heart Month

The help raise awareness about heart disease, plan to wear red on *National Wear Red Day®*, which is the first Friday in February!

To bring awareness to how common heart disease is, here are the unsettling facts:

- Heart disease is still the **number one cause of death** in the United States.

- Both men and women are affected by it, but slightly **more than half of all people who die from heart disease are men**.[1]

- **One person dies every 37 seconds** in the United States from cardiovascular disease.[1]

- In the United States, **someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds**.[3]

- **About 1 in 5 heart attacks are silent**—the damage is done, but the person is not aware of it.[3]

- **Having high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and smoking** are key risk factors for heart disease.
    - About half of Americans (~47%) have at least one of these three risk factors.[4]

- **Other medical conditions and lifestyle choices that can put people at greater risk for heart disease, include:**
    - Diabetes
    - Overweight and obesity
    - Unhealthy diet
    - Physical inactivity
    - Excessive alcohol use
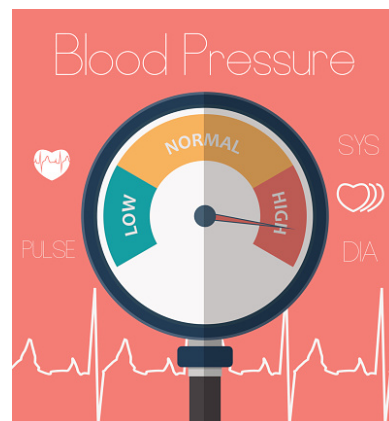
Instead of focusing on what foods/beverages you need to give up, focus on foods to include in your diet that promote heart health.

5 Foods to Include in Your Diet for Heart Health:

1. **Oatmeal** – high in soluble fiber, which helps move extra cholesterol out of your body and has also shown to help improve blood sugar control.
   - ✓ Try eating oatmeal for breakfast most days out of the week with fruit and chopped nuts or nut butter added to it.
   - ✓ You can also add oatmeal to your meatloaf to add bulk and fiber to your meal.

2. **Soy** – a vegetarian source of protein that has been shown to help reduce "bad" LDL cholesterol.
   - ✓ Use soy-based foods like silken tofu in your smoothies for a creamy texture with added protein.
   - ✓ Swap milk for a calcium-fortified soy beverage in your cereal or use it as a coffee creamer.
   - ✓ Top your salad with edamame or add it to a slaw recipe.

3. **Spinach** – like other vegetables, spinach is a good source of potassium, fiber, and is very low in calories.
   - ✓ Add spinach to your smoothies for extra vitamins and fiber.
   - ✓ Use spinach in soup recipes or add it to your scrambled eggs & omelets.

4. **Salmon** – a wonderful source of omega-3 fatty acids, which have shown to help lower the risk of having a heart attack, reduce triglyceride levels, and help to decrease blood pressure levels.
   - ✓ Aim for at least 2 servings of salmon per week (or 8oz/week) to get these heart-healthy benefits.
   - ✓ Try pesto baked salmon for dinner or poached lemon pepper salmon on top of a salad for lunch.

5. **Walnuts** – full of polyunsaturated fats, which are known to have a cholesterol lowering effect. They also contain omega-3 fats like salmon, which is great for people that do not eat fish.
   - o Have a small handful (1/4 cup or about 7 whole walnuts) for a snack or eat them along with raisins for a quick trail mix.
   - o Top your oatmeal with crushed walnuts or use them as a topping for baked fish or chicken.

Nutrients to Limit for a Heart-Healthy Diet

A heart-healthy diet does not mean you have to give up any foods, but there are some nutrients, foods, and beverages that should be limited to help reduce the risk of developing heart disease:

- ✓ **Sodium** – The average American eats around 3,400mg of sodium per day which is far more than the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation of less than 2,300mg per day.
    - o For people with high blood pressure, the recommended sodium level may be even lower.
    - o Read food labels and choose products that have less sodium for the same serving size.
    - o Choose low-sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added products.
    - o Choose fresh, frozen, or no-salt-added foods instead of pre-seasoned, marinated, brined, processed meats, poultry, and vegetables.
    - o Flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of using salt.
- ✓ **Saturated and *Trans* Fats** – Most Americans exceed the recommended limits for saturated and *trans* fats (less than 10% of daily calories for saturated fat).
    - o Saturated fat, when consumed in excess, has been shown to raise total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL, also referred to as "bad") cholesterol in the blood, which can increase the risk for heart disease.
        - ▪ Examples include fatty cuts of meat, poultry with skin, butter, coconut and palm oils.
    - o *Trans* fats should be limited as much as possible by limiting foods that contain hydrogenated/partially hydrogenated fats.
        - ▪ Examples include coffee creamers, some desserts, microwave popcorn, some peanut butters, and stick margarines.
- ✓ **Alcohol** – Excessive alcohol intake increases the risk of many chronic diseases. Too much alcohol can raise blood pressure, triglycerides in your blood, cause unwanted weight gain, and can contribute to heart failure in some people.
    - o Women should have no more than one alcoholic drink per day.
    - o Men should have no more than two alcoholic drinks per day.
- ✓ **Added Sugars** – The average American gets 270 calories each day from added sugars. This is about 17 teaspoons of sugar or 70.8 grams of sugar.
    - o **The American Heart Association recommends:**
        - ▪ No more than 6 teaspoons of added sugars per day for women.
        - ▪ No more than 9 teaspoons of added sugars per day for men.
    - o A study that followed 40,000 males for 20 years found that those who averaged one can of soda or sugary beverage per day had a 20% higher risk of having a heart attack or dying from a heart attack than males who rarely consumed sugary drinks.[4] A related study in women found a similar relationship between sugary beverage consumption and heart disease.[5]

About

574,000

people in Illinois
have coronary heart disease.

This is the most common form of heart disease and can often be prevented. **#OurHearts** are healthier when we move more, eat healthier, get enough sleep, reduce stress, and quit smoking—together!

Learn more at hearttruth.gov.

Source: CDC. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Survey Data, 2018.

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Attachments:
- Cut Down on Added Sugars (DGA 2015-2020)
- Life is Sweet - Sugar Swaps (American Heart Association)
- Cut Out Added Sugars (American Heart Association)
- Sip Smart to Reduce Sugar (American Heart Association)
- Saturated Fat Fact Sheet (FDA)
- Trans Fats Fact Sheet (FDA)
- Test Your High Blood Pressure Knowledge (Activity)
- Wear Red Day Poster (NIH)
- **Recipes**: Teriyaki Tilapia with Cilantro Lime Rice; Mediterranean Tuna Chef Salad

References:

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3. Fryar CD, Chen T-C, Li X. Prevalence of uncontrolled risk factors for cardiovascular disease: United States, 1999–2010 pdf icon[PDF-494K]. NCHS data brief, no. 103. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; 2012. Accessed May 9, 2019.
4. de Koning L, Malik VS, Kellogg MD, Rimm EB, Willett WC, Hu FB. Sweetened beverage consumption, incident coronary heart disease, and biomarkers of risk in men. *Circulation*. 2012;125(14):1735-1741, S1731.
5. Fung TT, Malik V, Rexrode KM, Manson JE, Willett WC, Hu FB. Sweetened beverage consumption and risk of coronary heart disease in women. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2009;89(4):1037-1042.
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