



your health & well-being

Reduce your risk of heart disease: eat a heart-healthy diet

How does diet help? It's true that an increased blood cholesterol level increases the risk of developing heart disease. The good news is that eating foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol can help reduce blood cholesterol levels.

What constitutes a heart-healthy diet?

Look for foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients, such as:

- Fruits and vegetables.
- Beans (including chickpeas and lentils) and whole grains (such as whole wheat, brown rice, oats, rye, bulgur, barley, quinoa, and corn).
- Oily fish like salmon, trout, albacore tuna, herring, mackerel, and sardines, which contain heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. You can also get omega-3 fats from omega-3 eggs, walnuts, flax seeds, and canola oil.

Start making those changes

It may seem hard at first to rethink all your meals and snacks and make real changes – but keep in mind that you don't have to change everything all at once. Try a few simple changes:

- Choose whole-grain bread instead of white bread.
- Have a piece of fruit instead of a candy bar.
- Add one or two servings of fruits and vegetables to your day. Slowly add more servings until you are eating at least 5 servings a day.
- Switch from 2% or whole milk to 1% or nonfat milk.
- Instead of meat, have fish for dinner. Brush it with olive oil, and broil or grill it.
- Switch from butter to a cholesterol-lowering margarine. Use olive or canola oil for cooking.
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor to foods.

What to watch out for

- Watch out for trans fats. Trans fat is especially bad because it both raises the level of "bad" cholesterol and lowers the "good" cholesterol in the blood.
- Trans fats are made when a liquid fat is turned into a solid fat (for example, when corn oil is made into stick margarine). They include shortening, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, and hydrogenated vegetable oils, and are found in many processed foods like cookies, crackers, and snack foods. Restaurants often use hydrogenated oils for frying foods, so limit fried foods when eating out.
- Watch out for salt (sodium). You need some sodium in your diet, but most people get far more than they need. Too much sodium tends to raise blood pressure. Processed foods and fast foods often contain a lot of sodium. Try to limit these foods and eat more fresh foods.
- Watch out for cholesterol. You can't assume that a food item that has no cholesterol must automatically be healthy. "Cholesterol-free" may not always mean the best foods for heart health. Keep in mind:
 - Plants never contain cholesterol.
 - Animal-based foods contain cholesterol in varying levels.
 - If you eat any plant-based food that is fried in oil, such as potato chips, french fries or fried onion rings, you'll be eating fat with every handful, even if they are 100% cholesterol-free.
- Look for more fiber. Soluble fiber has been shown to have some heart-healthy benefits. Look for food labels that specifically say the food is recommended for a heart-healthy diet.



it's time to feel better



CIGNA

825467 12/08



One of the most important things you can do is to start eating a heart-healthy diet. Did you know that changing your diet can help stop or even reverse heart disease?

february tip of the month

You can do a lot to reduce and control the amount of total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol you eat every day. Try these recommendations:

- When you use fats, use them sparingly. Limit butter, oil, margarine or mayonnaise in foods. One teaspoon of butter, oil or regular margarine contains about five grams of fat.
- Go easy with salad dressing – just a couple of teaspoons, not a full ladle. Or use low-fat or fat-free dressing or a squeeze of citrus juice on your salads.
- Remove visible fat from meat and skin from poultry before eating, and drain the fat from ground beef after browning.
- Use low-fat methods of cooking such as steaming, poaching, baking, grilling and broiling instead of sautéing, pan-frying and deep-frying.
- Use mostly low-fat or nonfat dairy products. Skim milk has all the nutrients of whole milk and less saturated fat. Choose lower fat cheese, yogurt, sour cream and creamers, too.
- Use nonstick sprays for cooking, instead of oils, butter or margarine.

On myCIGNA.com this month

If you are concerned about your risk of heart disease, one of the best things you can do is change the way you eat – but where do you start? How do you learn more about that? Go to the myHealth tab on myCIGNA.com, where you'll find the Healthwise® medical encyclopedia. myCIGNA.com a great resource for tools and information about heart-healthy eating and more.

Another great resource is the American Heart Association website at www.americanheart.org. Visit the Diet and Nutrition section for information that can help you eat healthier in 2009.



"CIGNA," "CIGNA HealthCare" and the "Tree of Life" logo are registered service marks of CIGNA Intellectual Property, Inc., licensed for use by CIGNA Corporation and its operating subsidiaries. All products and services are provided exclusively by such operating subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. Such operating subsidiaries include Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Tel-Drug, Inc. and its affiliates, CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., Intracorp, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. In Arizona, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Arizona, Inc. In California, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of California, Inc. and Great-West Healthcare of California, Inc. In Connecticut, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Connecticut, Inc. In Virginia, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare Mid-Atlantic, Inc. In North Carolina, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of North Carolina, Inc. All other medical plans in these states are insured or administered by Connecticut General Life Insurance Company.