

**- Health / Diet****Live well by eating well**

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From the start, “Live Well Polk!” has been about helping you live healthy by eliminating bad habits and replacing them with good ones. We know that’s easier said than done, but it’s possible when you know where to start.

Unfortunately, finding that starting point can be overwhelming. Everywhere you turn, someone has a plan, but fad diets and the latest exercise craze won’t get you where you want and need to be for the long haul. You do that with patience and a commitment to making changes you can stick to.

A good place to start is to establish a healthy nutrition plan. We aren’t talking about the kind of diet where you restrict food you eat just to achieve some shortterm goal. No, we are talking about a lifelong change that helps you achieve that immediate goal, reach new ones that you hadn’t dared to think about, and best of all, maintain those goals for a lifetime. There’s nothing better you could do for your heart. And your heart will appreciate it.

The key to a healthy diet is reducing the amount of highfat, high-calorie foods that you take in. That may seem daunting, but the reward is worth the effort. These steps can help you get started:

Produce is full of vitamins, minerals, fiber and other essential nutrients. And produce is practically free of fat and cholesterol.

Use liquid vegetable oils in place of soft or hard margarine or shortening. Limit cheese, butter, ice cream, processed and fatty meats, cakes, cookies, pastries, muffins, pies and doughnuts.

A great guideline is to eat fish at least two times a week, particularly fish like salmon, trout and herring. All of these contain omega-3 fatty acids. They may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.

To make the best use of food labels, first look at how many servings the package contains. Then look at the calories and fat per serving. Multiply the calories and fat by the number of servings you’re going to eat.

Limiting sugary beverages like soda and juice with added sugar will benefit your heart and your waistline.

Alcohol is high in calories. Limit intake to 1 drink per day for women and 2 for men.

After you buy nutritious foods, make sure you prepare them in a healthy manner. Grill fish and chicken instead of frying it.

If you do, you will also watch your health improve.

Following these guidelines can reduce bad cholesterol levels and decrease your risk of developing heart disease. And, you don’t have to give up tasty foods. The American Heart Association offers some great tasting heart healthy recipes at [recipes.heart.org](https://www.heart.org).

March is National Nutrition Month and there is no better time to put this plan in action. Celebrate the month by following these guidelines and we bet you’ll begin to feel and look better before you know it.

If you are already on this path, great job! Keep up the good work! If you haven’t yet started, make today the day. We don’t want you to just live; we want you to live well.