

FOODS TO AVOID FOR A HEALTHIER HEART

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In every family, there is at least one or two who would have high cholesterol, obesity, high blood pressure or diabetes. Prescribed for them to eat would be salmon and tuna for their omega-3 healthy fats that lower blood pressure. Olive oil, walnuts, almonds, oranges, avocados, cherries, dark chocolate, and dark leafy greens will be strongly suggested. Eat more heart-healthy fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy.



But just as certain foods are good for your heart, there are foods high in sodium, saturated fat, added sugars, and alcohol that should be avoided.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends avoiding these food items for heart health: high-fat dairy products, fatty meats, processed meats, tropical oils, partially hydrogenated fats, processed foods, foods and beverages with added sugar, foods high in sodium, and alcohol.

Here are eight things to avoid or take in limited amounts for a healthier heart:

Fat, salt, and sugar. You might say that you are not deliberately adding them to your food but while that is good, understand that they are incorporated in a lot of processed food, fast food, and restaurant dishes. That's why it is always best to eat home-cooked meals if you want to be in control of your sugar, salt, and fat intake. Make sure you read food labels to regulate your consumption.

Pastries, cakes and desserts. Tempting as they are, you should eat less of these. White flour could spike your blood sugar and make you hungrier. Baked goods contain heaps of sugar and are linked to increased triglyceride levels. If you are really craving them, it would be best to bake them at home using healthier flour and sugar substitutes.

Rice, bread, pizza, and pasta. The main ingredients, refined grains, convert quickly to sugar that our bodies store as fat. If your diet is high in refined grains, the tendency is to have belly fat, which is linked to heart disease and diabetes. Swap these choices with brown rice, oats, and whole wheat. Make the pizza and pasta at home with healthy substitutes such as herbs and spices instead of too much salt. When dining out, get a thin crust with loads of veggies.

Processed food and red meat. As the food pyramid suggests, have red meat less frequently to lower your risk for heart disease. Beef, lamb, and pork are high in saturated fat and can increase your cholesterol levels. When you do indulge (once a week), go for lean cuts such as sirloin, round, and extra-lean ground beef. Processed meats such as salami, hotdogs, sausage, and luncheon meats are high in saturated fats and sodium. For bacon lovers, note that more than half of its calories are from saturated fat. It's also full of preservatives.

Soda and alcohol. Just a can of soda has more sugar than your limit for the whole day. There are diet options, but some studies link them to weight gain and strokes. Experts say that moderate intake of alcohol is not bad for your heart unless you already have high blood pressure or high triglycerides. Heavy drinkers, though, are at risk for heart disease, weight gain, and high blood pressure.

Butter. This flavor-rich ingredient is high in saturated fat, which can spike your cholesterol and increase the probability of heart disease. You can swap butter with olive oil instead, which has heart-friendly mono- and polyunsaturated fats. **Flavored yogurt.** Yogurt is a good source of nutrients that can help you against high blood pressure. However, there are many flavored versions that are full of sugar. It is always best to get plain low-fat yogurt, which you can top with fresh fruits.

Fried chicken and French fries. French fries are common sides in restaurants, but this deepfried comfort food is loaded with fat and salt. The deepfrying of potatoes and chicken, or anything else, for that matter, adds unnecessary calories, fat, and salt. Make healthier versions at home. You can even use sweet potatoes instead. Air-dry or bake them with olive oil. For healthier chicken preparation, coat skinless chicken breasts with whole-wheat flour and bake them.
