

# tips for a healthy heart

Pay attention to your food! The foods you eat can have a direct effect on the health of your heart. Here are our top 5 tips.

## 1 | choose your protein sources wisely

Go for protein foods that are low in saturated fats.

### Tips:

- Choose chicken & fish over red meat
- Choose 'white meat' over 'dark meat' and take the skin off poultry
- Include plant protein options: beans, legumes, soy, tofu
- Choose lower fat milk and cheese products (<20% MF for cheese)
- Limit intake of 'mystery meat' ex. luncheon meats, wieners

## 3 | focus on fibre

Aim for 25-50 g per day for heart health and appetite control.

### Tips:

- Have fruits & vegetables unpeeled
- Sprinkle high fibre grains & seeds on your yogurt or oatmeal: (chia seeds, flax seeds, all bran buds)
- Add beans/legumes to your soups and salads (can use canned)
- Choose whole grain foods over white

## 2 | make sure to get enough omega 3's

Omega -3 fatty acids have strong protective effects on the heart.

### Tips:

- Have fatty fish 2-4x/week (salmon, trout, cod, sardines, anchovies, carp)
- Add nuts & seeds to salads, yogurt and for snacks: walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseed (ground)
- Try omega-3 fortified products: eggs, yogurt, soy beverages
- Speak to your doctor about taking a supplement if you are unable to eat fish 2-4x/week

## 4 | watch out for sodium

Too much salt (sodium) can raise our blood pressure and put stress on the heart.

### Tips:

- Limit processed foods: chips, canned soups, deli meats, ketchup, pickles
- Look for the 'low sodium' label on packages
- Avoid adding salt to your cooking
- Reduce salt intake gradually: our taste buds are very good at adapting!
- Ask for gravy/salad dressing on the side at restaurants

## 5 | eliminate trans fats

These fats are artificially made and have a strong link to heart disease.

### Tips:

- Avoid commercial cakes, cookies, pastries, potato chips, deep fried foods
- Choose soft margarines over hard margarines or butter
- Make sure the ingredient list does not include the terms "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" oil



Remember that diet is not the only factor that affects heart health. Focus on these 6 overall steps to make sure your heart is well protected.

## 1 | know your numbers

Having high cholesterol or high blood pressure puts you at greater risk of heart disease. Knowing your numbers means knowing what you need to work on.

| Measure           | Target  | My Value |
|-------------------|---------|----------|
| LDL – Cholesterol | <2.0    |          |
| Blood Pressure    | <130/80 |          |



## 2 | accept help from medications to protect the heart

As we get older, diet alone is often not enough to protect against heart disease! Speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medications.

## 4 | get active

Remember that physical activity doesn't have to be done in a gym!

### Tips:

- Find something you **enjoy** doing, like dancing, walking, or playing with your children/grandchildren
- Don't forget about resistance exercise! This can often be done at home
- Break up long periods of sitting during the day.
- Schedule activity into your calendar, just like any other appointment
- Take the stairs whenever possible
- Walk to the store
- Plan ahead: decide which days/times you are going to exercise at the beginning of each week

## 6 | set yourself up for success with good sleep & stress management

Make sure you acknowledge if you are experiencing high levels of stress – this is the first step. You can then explore coping strategies that work for you.

Never forget that sleep is an essential part of your heart and overall health.

## 3 | pay attention to your food

Remember to minimize saturated and trans fats in your diet, and maximize fibre and omega 3's. See the reverse side of this handout for practical tips.

## 5 | keep your lungs & liver healthy

Smoking puts you at much higher risk for heart disease. However, it is never too late! Once you quit, your risk level returns to near normal levels after 3 years.

If you do not drink alcohol – don't start. If you do drink, make sure you drink in moderation: 1 drink/day for women, 1-2 drinks/day for men. **Moderate** consumption of red wine has been shown to help protect the heart from heart disease.



### Tips:

- Keep your bedroom dark and silent
- Use your bedroom for sleep only
- Maintain a regular bedtime and sleep schedule
- Stop working 1 hr prior to sleep and spend that time relaxing
- Watch out for signs of sleep apnea. Talk to your doctor if you feel you are not getting a good night's sleep.