

Heart Healthy Food Swaps

Three Simple Guidelines to Give Your Heart Some Extra Love



1 Eat Less Sugar and Salt

Although adding extra sugar and salt can make food extra delicious and hard to resist, those simple additions can be really hard on our heart and health. Not only does added sugar increase overall inflammation in the body, but also the extra calories tend to lead to excess weight, which makes the heart work harder. Too much sodium in our diet can cause high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

The good news: When we cut back on sugar and salt, our taste buds adjust quickly. The less sweetened drinks you drink and the less processed salty and sweet foods you eat, the less your body will crave them.

EASY SWAPS FOR LESS SUGAR AND SALT	
LESS	MORE
 Soda, sweet tea	 Unsweetened tea, water (try flavoring with cucumber slices or lemon)
 Fruit snacks	 Unsweetened dried fruit
 Canned veggies	 Frozen veggies (no sauce), no-salt-added canned veggies <i>Note: you can also rinse canned veggies to reduce sodium content</i>
 Cookies, snack cakes	 Dark chocolate, granola, high-fiber cereal, flaxseed meal, chia seeds
 Chips	 Lower sodium chips, baked chips, unsalted roasted nuts

2 Eat More Plants

Whole, unprocessed plant foods are great for our heart and overall health because they're low in fat, high in fiber and full of vitamins and minerals. Look for foods in their purest forms — those that contain less ingredients and don't have a food label are best. If they have a food label, look for plant foods that are high in fiber (5g or more) and say 100% whole grain on them. Sometimes food companies try and trick you by adding brown coloring and calling it whole grain, but if it says 100% whole grain, then you know it's the real deal.

EASY SWAPS FOR MORE PLANTS	
LESS	MORE
 White rice, pasta, white bread	 100% whole grain varieties
 Meat in dishes	 Veggies in dishes
 Prepackaged smoothies, juices	 Whole fruit
 Fruit snacks, sweetened fruits	 Fruit in 100% juice, unsweetened applesauce

3 Swap Animal Fats for Healthier Plant Fats

Fat in the diet isn't a bad thing as long as you choose healthy options. While fats from meat and processed vegetable oils increase cholesterol and the risk of heart disease, healthy fats can actually lower the risk of heart disease (and keep you feeling full and satisfied). When looking for the healthiest eating plan, many researchers point to the Mediterranean diet, based on heart healthy fats found in olive oil and fatty fish, and a wide variety of plant foods.

EASY SWAPS FOR HEALTHIER FATS	
LESS	MORE
 Beef, pork	 Fish (specially fatty fish like salmon)
 Ground beef, pork	 Ground chicken or turkey
 Vegetable oils, shortening, butter	 Olive oil, avocado oil
 Mayo	 Avocado
 Store-bought salad dressing	 Homemade dressing with olive oil or avocado oil

The Importance of Portions

No matter how healthy you make your meal or snacks, it's important to still maintain proper portions to experience the benefits. For instance, swapping chips for nuts is a great way to include healthier fats in your diet, but you only need one serving, which is about ¼ cup or 1.5 oz. Any more than that, and you risk adding excess calories to your diet, which can result in weight gain and a higher risk for heart disease.

Two easy ways to remember proper portions:

THE PLATE METHOD

Take your meal plate and:

1/2



Fill half of it with non-starchy vegetables, such as salad, green beans, broccoli or carrots.

1/4



Fill one quarter with a lean protein, such as chicken, turkey, beans, tofu or eggs.

1/4



Fill a quarter with a grain or starch, such as potatoes, rice or pasta (or skip the starch altogether and double up on non-starchy veggies).



THE HAND METHOD

Using your recommended serving sizes, you can visually measure your food with your hand.

1

Fingertip
(tip to 1st joint)
1 teaspoon

2

Thumb tip
(tip to 1st joint)
1 tablespoon

3

Thumb
(tip to base)
1 ounce of meat
or cheese

4

Palm of hand
(no fingers)
3 ounces of meat,
fish, or poultry

1-2 oz



Cupped hand
1-2 ounces of nuts or
pretzels

1 cup



Fist
1 cup or
1 medium
fruit



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