

5 Keys to a Healthy Diet and Healthy Heart

Mayo Clinic Essential Heart Guide 2012



1. Boost Your Vegetables and Fruits

Your mother was right when she insisted you eat your broccoli. Vegetables and fruits are the foundation of a healthy diet. They're loaded with vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants that may reduce your health risks. Vegetables and fruits are also low in fat and cholesterol.

2. Eat Breakfast and Eat it Right

Eating a healthy Breakfast is one of the best ways to ensure that you have a varied, balanced and moderate diet. When you eat breakfast, you're more likely to get the vitamins, minerals and fiber you need for good health. Breakfast helps you control weight, reduce fat intake and lower cholesterol. You also may find eating breakfast improves your concentration and productivity during the day.

3. Go for the Whole Grains

Whole grains are an essential part of a healthy diet. Whole grains are good sources of complex carbohydrates and key vitamins and minerals. Whole grains are also naturally low in fat. Better yet, they've been linked to a lower rate of heart disease.

4. Focus on Fats

Of all the changes that can make your diet heart healthy, reducing the amount of saturated fat and trans fat – think solid fats such as butter, margarine and shortening – in the food you eat may have the greatest impact. These fats raise your cholesterol levels and increase your risk of coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke.

5. Be Lean with Protein

Good sources of protein include lean meat, poultry and low-fat dairy products. But legumes – beans, peas and lentils – are good sources of protein and can be substituted for meat. They contain little fat and no cholesterol and are high in fiber. If you really want to boost your heart health, eat more fish and nuts. The omega-3 fatty acids found in many types of fish and nuts can help lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.