

Proactive Heart Health "Quick" Tips

By Mary Jane Dittmar



NATIONAL HEART MONTH

February is American Heart Month, and February 4 is National Wear Red Day. Dr. Travis Stork, ER physician and co-host of the Emmy Award-winning talk television show "The Doctors," reminds us to be proactive in reducing the risk of heart disease by doing the following:

- Purchasing foods and beverages without added sugars and that are low in sodium.
- Drinking alcohol in moderation (one drink/day for women; two drinks/day for men).
- Watching portion sizes of ALL foods and eating a balanced diet.
- Cutting back on food high in cholesterol (goal of no more than 300 mg/day).
- Avoiding all tobacco products.
- Exercising on a regular basis.

Some tips for your proactive plan follow. Unless indicated, they are from *Diabetes focus*, Fall 2011.

Nutrition: Include in your diet apples, beets, cranberries and pomegranates. They are rich in antioxidants, which promote heart health, protect your body cells from damage, and reduce the risk of several types of cancer.

Pumpkin, carrots, squash (acorn, butternut, buttercup) and sweet potatoes are loaded with beta-carotene to maintain eyesight.

Butter lettuce, beans, endive, and Swiss chard are high in the B vitamin folate. According to the NIH folate fact sheet, folate helps produce and maintain new cells, helps to prevent changes to DNA that may lead to cancer, and is also essential for the metabolism of the amino acid (a building block of protein), homocysteine, high levels of which may increase the risk of developing coronary heart disease, heart attack, stroke, and Alzheimer's disease.

Cauliflower, garlic, ginger, pears, and turnips help lower cholesterol and blood pressure.

“Instant Diet Makeovers.” Here are a few easy “switches” that can make you healthier, according to *Diabetes focus*:

Reducing Fat: One-half bagel instead of one-half muffin (1 g vs. 4 g; corn tortilla instead of taco shell (1 g vs. 6 g); spaghetti and marinara sauce instead of macaroni and cheese (2 g vs. 13 g).

Cutting Calories: Strawberries on angel food cake instead of strawberry ice cream (194 calories vs. 254); one-half coleslaw over macaroni salad (130 calories vs. 280).

Cutting Sodium: Swiss cheese instead of American cheese (25 mg vs. 300 mg); one-half cup of plain instant oats instead one-half cup of flavored instant oats (0 mg vs. 300 mg); 1 Tbsp. no-salt-added ketchup instead of 1 Tbsp. regular ketchup (0 mg vs. 190 mg).

Sweets: 16-oz. fat-free cappuccino instead of coffee frappe (14 g vs. 52g/100 calories vs. 260); 1 cake-type doughnut vs. glazed doughnut (21.4 vs. 30.4 g/ 100 calories vs. 239); five chocolate kisses instead of 2 “fun size” chocolate candy bars (12.2 g vs. 19.8 g;/105 calories vs. 151).

Photos courtesy of www.photos8.com.



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