Heart Healthy Diet Basics

For good heart health, eat a diet that is low in fat, cholesterol and salt. This handout will give you some basic information to help you do this.

- **Decrease total fat intake, especially saturated and trans fats.**
  
  Saturated fats are mainly in animal foods like red meat, cheese, and high fat milk. Trans fats are listed on ingredient labels as “partially hydrogenated oils.” Trans fats are often found in store bought baked goods, non-dairy whipped toppings, cream substitutes, some crackers and cookies, and many deep fried foods.

- **Limit high cholesterol foods.**
  
  Egg yolks, fatty meats, organ meats, butter, whole milk and other high fat dairy products are high cholesterol foods.

- **Substitute monounsaturated fat or polyunsaturated fat for saturated fat in your diet.**
  
  Monounsaturated fats include olive, peanut, and canola oils. Safflower, corn and sunflower oils, and most margarines and salad dressings are examples of polyunsaturated fats. Also, fish has a higher content of polyunsaturated fat than red meat.

  - A special note on fish:
    
    Many fish are low fat. Some fish that have a higher fat content such as salmon are high in a kind of fat called omega 3 fatty acids. This type of fat has been shown to be very heart healthy. It is recommended to eat fish three times a week for this reason. One caution: consider how you prepare it so that you don’t add large amounts of undesired fats. Baking, broiling, grilling or poaching fish is best.

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- **Limit the total amount of fat in your diet.**
  Avoid fried foods and limit fats, even healthier high fat foods such as margarine, vegetable oils and salad dressings. Although monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are a better choice, these fats should also be used in moderation because all sources of fat are equally high in calories.

- **Limit salt since it is the major source of sodium in our diets.**
  Do not add salt to food at the table.

- **Avoid food where large amounts of salt and/or sodium have been added.**
  This includes frozen dinners, cured meats and lunchmeats, pickles, potato chips, sauerkraut, processed cheese foods and most canned products such as soup, vegetables and pasta sauces.

- **Use herbs and spices to help flavor foods.**

- **Keep serving sizes moderate.**
  Keep in mind that all foods have calories, so avoid large amounts and second helpings. Portion control is very important in maintaining or losing weight.

- **Satisfy your appetite.**
  Raw vegetables, fresh fruit, water and other calorie free beverages can help satisfy your appetite. Pick caffeine free beverages most of the time.

- **Do not skip meals.**
  This often leads to overeating at the next meal.

- **If you have diabetes, eat to control your blood sugar levels.**
  Limiting total calories and high amounts of carbohydrates can help keep your blood sugar levels in control.

- **Lose weight if you need to.**
  If you weigh too much, your heart has to work harder. Focus on cutting back on portions slightly, eating more healthy foods like vegetables and fruits, and moving more.
• **Be as active as possible.**
  Being active will help you lose weight, because your body burns stored calories. If your activity is restricted, non-strenuous activities may be used. Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

**Other Tips**

• **Read all labels.**
  Avoid products which contain shortening, vegetable shortening, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, lard, butter, beef suet, animal or chicken fat, bacon, cream, salt and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

• **Check all medicines with your doctor.**
  Commonly used medicines for indigestion which are high in sodium include Alka Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer, Rolaids, some laxatives, pain relievers, antibiotics and cough medicines.

• **Remember, the fresher the better.**
  You will cut down on your sodium, fat and cholesterol if you make your own food with acceptable food items.

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📖 **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions.** You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).