

Healthy Heart

Eating for a healthy heart



Essential fats

Of all the fats we consume, two are essential. They are omega-6 fats and omega-3 fats. Both of these vitally important fats are involved in controlling blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood clotting, heart rhythms and inflammation.

High levels of Omega 6 can reduce the benefits of Omega 3 fats. In our modern diets Omega 6 is much more readily available as it is contained in vegetable oils, most wholegrains and beans. This means it is also in any foods that are prepared using vegetable oils such as convenience or 'fast' foods. The best source of Omega 3 is from oily fish, with some seeds and nuts being other sources (pumpkin, flax, walnut) which are not as common in the modern eating pattern.

So you can see how easy it is to have an unhealthy balance of Omega 3 and 6 unless we also eat a lot more oily fish (salmon, trout, mackerel) and nuts and seeds. Check the labels on any food claiming to be high in Omega 3 and pick the ones where the amount of Omega 6 is no more than double the amount of Omega 3.

Saturated fat

Eating too much saturated fat can increase your blood cholesterol levels which in turn can raise your risk of coronary heart disease and have other health implications. It is important to cut back on saturated fat and replace with unsaturated fats, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.

Most people in the UK are eating too much saturated fat - about 20% more than the recommended daily allowances. As a marker, the average male should be consuming no more than 30g saturated fat per day, whereas the average female should be consuming no more than 20g saturated fat per day.

Reading labels

LOW **LOW FAT**
Less than 1.5g saturated fat per 100g serving

HIGH **HIGH FAT**
More than 5g saturated fat per 100g serving

Salt

Salt can raise your blood pressure which can triple your chances of heart disease and stroke. The guideline daily amount (GDA) suggests that an adult should consume no more than 6 grams of salt (2.5g of Sodium) per day with children consuming even less. To put this into perspective one teaspoon will contain 6g of salt.

However what many people are unaware of is that approximately 75% of the salt we eat is already in our food, processed foods such as canned soups, takeaways and ready made meals are prime culprits but other foods to beware of are crisps, salted nuts, canned and packet soups and sauces, baked beans, canned vegetables, pork pies and pizzas.

As a general rule with regard to every 100g more than 1.25g salt (0.5g sodium) would be classified as high and anything less than 0.25g salt (0.1 sodium) would be low.

Reduce your salt intake

- Use food labels to choose lower salt options.
- Try using herbs instead of salt at the table
- Watch out for salty snacks, processed foods and takeaways.
- Add less salt to food when cooking
- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables aiming for at least 5 a day.
- Be wary of cooking sauces (especially soy sauce)



Healthy Heart

Exercise for a healthy heart



Getting physically active might involve going swimming, doing an exercise class, or playing a sport. But it also includes everyday things such as walking, gardening and climbing stairs. You can gain the heart health benefits of activity from all these different activity types.

Getting physical is good for the heart

- Physical activity halves the risk of developing coronary heart disease
- If you are more physically active you have an increased chance of surviving a heart attack compared with people who have not been active
- Physical activity helps to lower blood pressure
- Reduces the risk of developing diabetes. If you already have diabetes, activity can help you control it

Think aerobic or cardiovascular (CV) activity

Aerobic activity is the most beneficial for the heart. That is any activity that is repetitive and rhythmical, involving large muscle groups such as the legs, shoulders and arms.

Walking, cycling, swimming and dancing are all included. These types of activities increase the body's demand for oxygen and adds to the workload of the heart and lungs, making the heart and circulation more efficient, helping to develop your stamina.

For more information or to schedule a health MOT* speak to a member of the fitness team.

* if available at your centre



Get SMART for a healthy heart

