

# Maintaining Heart Health



1. **Avoid trans fats.** These are the most detrimental of all fats. The FDA has now banned these hydrogenated fats. They are slowly being phased out of the highly processed foods like packaged baked goods, some margarines, frozen meals, candy, etc.



2. **Avoid refined carbohydrates.** The latest research shows that refined carbs and added sugars contribute more to heart disease, Diabetes, stroke, and high blood pressure than saturated fat or dietary cholesterol do. Refined starches can include pasta, rice, crackers, bars, bread, chips, cereals, etc. Look for whole grain versions of these foods. The worst offenders seem to be sugar-sweetened beverages, candy, sweet additions to coffee and tea, sweet snacks, sugar-sweetened cereals, and desserts. Grams of added sugar are now a requirement on the food label and should be limited to less than 25 grams per day. Controlling blood sugar and improving insulin sensitivity are important to reduce heart disease risk (please download **Diabetes Basics guide** from this website homepage).

3. **Increase anti-inflammatory fat.** These are the fats that grow out of the ground, such as olive oil, nuts, nut butters, seeds, olives, avocados. Avocado oil and coconut oil tolerate cooking well. Olive oil is best in salad dressing or another form that will not be heated. Avoid inflammatory oils: vegetable oil, soybean, canola, safflower, and corn.



**4. Increase omega-3 fatty acids.** The omega-3 fats DHA and EPA are fish oils that play many roles in the health of our eyes, brain, heart, and gut health in particular. These essential oils can decrease inflammation, triglycerides and blood pressure. The best sources are marine sources that are low in mercury, like wild & Alaskan salmon, herring, pacific oysters, trout, Atlantic and Pacific



mackerel, krill, sardines, and algae. Higher mercury fish to avoid are swordfish, shark, tilefish, and king mackerel. Caution with marlin, orange roughy, and tuna. It is recommended to eat at least 8 ounces of seafood per week. A fish oil supplement may also be used (EPA & DHA fats should be at least 250mg per day). Great supplements are Big Bold Health Omega-3 Rejuvenate, Omega-3 Health by Body Health, as well as The Omega by Cymbiotika. Foods high in ALA omega-3s such as chia seeds, flax seeds, walnuts, avocado, and soybeans are very nutritious and beneficial.

**5. Limit sodium to less than 2,300 milligrams per day.** Further reduction to 1,500 mg for people with hypertension, congestive heart failure, or chronic kidney disease may be recommended. The best way to cut down on sodium is to limit processed food. Sodium can contribute to heart disease even in people with low blood pressure. Foods high in sodium include canned foods (especially soups), frozen meals, marinated meats, cheese, seasonings, packaged convenience foods, chips, pretzels and crackers. Watch out for hidden sodium in dips, salad dressings, soy sauce, and other condiments. Look for low sodium versions of foods. Avoid using the salt shaker. Instead use fresh herbs, lemon, garlic, onion, pepper, Tabasco, or Mrs. Dash etc. Herbs and spices have many health benefits!

**6. Exercise regularly.** This is a VITAL component of weight management and limits risk for almost every disease.



The most important factor regarding exercise is that it become a consistent habit. Eventually you should work up to 150 minutes per week. (Please download **Exercise guide** from this website homepage).

7. **Maintain a healthy weight.** Focus on long-term weight management by identifying & strategizing against your habits that are keeping weight on. (Please download **Barriers to Weight Management guide** from this website homepage).

8. **Increase self-care & self-love.** Our perceptions are our reality. Our minds must be in peace for our bodies to be in peace and vice-versa. (Please download **Self-Care guide** from this website).

9. **Increase your fiber intake.** High fiber foods include beans, nuts, nut butters, whole grains, fruits, and veggies. Foods that contain an amount of whole grain significant enough to contribute to our health may display a yellow postage stamp on their label and must have at least 8 grams of whole grain per serving.

Otherwise if a product just lists the words “whole grain”, it is meaningless. It is very important to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and veggies per day for the endless



benefits they provide, including potassium, which can mitigate sodium intake. Many high fiber foods are prebiotics and contribute to a healthy microbiome, which is continually being connected to more and more health benefits. (Please download Heal Your Gut guide from this website homepage) Aim for at least 48 grams of whole grain and 25 grams of fiber per day.

**10. Reduce or eliminate alcohol intake.** Heavy intake of alcohol is defined as anything over 7 drinks per week. Exceeding this increases risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, digestive problems, many cancers, anxiety, depression, cognitive issues, and more. One alcoholic beverage is 1-1.5oz hard alcohol, 4-5oz wine, or 12oz beer.

**11. Caution with vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements.** It is very important to educate yourself from credible sources on risks & benefits before taking any supplements. Refer to the resource page on [www.nutritiontransformation.com](http://www.nutritiontransformation.com) for my recommended supplements and sources of information. A general guideline is to take a multivitamin providing 50%-250% of the DV (daily value) for each nutrient. In other words, avoid megadosing that may occur if you take 10 times the recommended amount of a nutrient (or 1,000% DV for that nutrient) unless advised to do so by a medical professional. Many people don't get the vitamin D (I like Synergy brand Vitamin D3 with K2) or magnesium (Magnesium Breakthrough from Biooptimizers) in their diets that they need, so those would be important nutrients to supplement. Both play roles in glucose control. For some, red yeast rice or niacin may be beneficial. Cho-Less by Natura is a good option in this case. CoQ10 (general dose is 100mg at night) may reduce muscle pain caused by statins, blood pressure, and overall heart disease risk.

**12. Get important lab work done.** We now understand that heart attacks and strokes are largely caused by inflammation, high blood pressure, and high blood sugar, not cholesterol. So rather than testing types of cholesterol, the more relevant tests are Apo-B and fasting insulin, which are markers for insulin resistance, leading to elevated glucose. Inflammation can loosely be measured by HSCRIP.

HDL cholesterol over 60 is ideal, and over 50 is usually acceptable.  
Triglycerides under 70 is ideal, and less than 100 is usually acceptable.

References:

1. NIH, What is a standard drink?.
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6. The Institute for Functional Medicine tool kit, 2022.
7. Dr Mark Hyman, Cholesterol & Heart Disease, Feb 2026

Last updated: February, 2026

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