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Q How can I eat better to reduce my risk of heart disease and stroke?

A Healthy eating doesn't mean making drastic changes in your eating habits. Instead, it involves making gradual, small changes in your diet, until you're enjoying a wide range of healthy, good-tasting foods. Here are five guidelines to get you off to a healthy start:

- 1. Choose lower-fat alternatives.**
 Too much fat delivers more calories than you need and can clog your cardiovascular system. Of the fat you do use, try to choose mono and poly unsaturated fats such as olive oil, canola and soft, non-hydrogenated margarines.
 - Switch to lower fat dairy products (skim, 1% or 2% milk);
 - Use less butter, margarine, lard and cooking oil;
 - Trim fat from meat before cooking;
 - Trim the skin off fish or poultry;
 - Keep dressings to a minimum.
- 2. Eat leaner meat and more alternatives.**
 Choosing leaner meats, watching your serving size and substituting alternatives like beans and lentils are part of healthy eating.
 - Limit serving of meat to the size of a deck of cards (about four ounces);
 - Trim the fat;
 - Prepare meat without adding any fat.
 - Choose meatless meals more often.
- 3. Eat more vegetables, fruits and whole grains.**
 Load up your plate with vegetables, fruits and grains. Aim for 5+ servings of vegetables, fruits and grains daily. You will be receiving vitamins such as C and Folic Acid, fibre and more.
 - Choose dark green and orange vegetables and fruits.
 - Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the top shelf of your refrigerator for easy snacking.
 - Double up on the vegetables you like.
 - Choose whole grains more often.
 - Start your day with cereals.
- 4. Eat less salt.**
 To reduce your salt intake, use fewer prepared foods such as canned goods, snack foods, soups, pickles, condiments and processed meats.
- 5. Drink less alcohol.**
 If you drink, try to limit your alcohol to one drink per day.



Q How can I reduce my stress?

A Happy. Sad. Upset. Angry. Joyous. Frustrated... any demand on the mind or body is a type of stress. The exact relationship between stress and heart disease or stroke is not clearly understood. We know that for some people, stressful situations contribute to high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure and cause blood clotting abnormalities. All of these factors increase your risk.

- What can you do?**
- awareness: identify what triggers stress for you and learn to recognize the symptoms you experience when stressed (e.g. muscle tension, headache, poor concentration, problems sleeping, frequent arguments, etc.);
 - once you recognize what triggers your stress, seek ways to eliminate or avoid what you can't control (e.g. take public transit if rush hour traffic drives you crazy);
 - a time management course can help you learn how to take unnecessary pressure off yourself. This is helpful if you have difficulty managing time and/or saying "No";
 - set aside time to relax every day. Learn some relaxation techniques;
 - get support from family and friends. Talk about your problems;
 - manage stress with regular physical activity;
 - get plenty of sleep and eat a healthy diet.




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