



Healthy diet and lifestyle is the best tool in the fight against heart disease.

Use up at least as many calories as you take in.

- Start by knowing [how many calories](#) you should be eating and drinking to maintain your weight.
- Don't eat more calories than you know you can burn up every day.
- Increase the amount and intensity of your physical activity to match the number of calories you take in.
- Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week or — best of all — at least 30 minutes every day.

Regular physical activity can help you maintain your weight, keep off weight that you lose and help you reach physical and cardiovascular fitness. If you can't do at least 30 minutes at one time, you can add up 10-minute sessions throughout the day.

If you would benefit from [lowering your blood pressure](#) or [cholesterol](#), the American Heart Association recommends 40 minutes of aerobic exercise of moderate to vigorous intensity three to four times a week.

Eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups.

You may be eating plenty of food, but your body may not be getting the nutrients it needs to be healthy. Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but are lower in calories. Eating a variety of [fruits and vegetables](#) may help you [control your weight](#), cholesterol and your blood pressure.

To get the nutrients you need, eat a dietary pattern that emphasizes:

- [fruits, vegetables](#),
- [whole grains](#),
- low-fat dairy products,
- [poultry, fish](#) and nuts,
- while limiting red meat and [sugary foods and beverages](#).

Many diets fit this pattern, including the [DASH \(Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension\)](#) eating plan and diets suggested by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the American Heart Association. Eating patterns can be adapted based on your cultural and food preferences and nutrition therapy for medical conditions such as [diabetes](#).

Eat less of the nutrient-poor foods.

The right number of calories to eat each day is based on your age and physical activity level and whether you're trying to gain, lose or maintain your weight. You could use your daily allotment of calories on a few high-calorie foods and beverages, but you probably wouldn't get the nutrients your body needs to be healthy. Limit foods and beverages high in calories but low in nutrients. Also limit the amount of saturated fat, [trans fat](#) and [sodium](#) you eat. [Read Nutrition Facts labels](#) carefully — the Nutrition Facts panel tells you the amount of healthy and unhealthy nutrients in a food or beverage.

As you make daily food choices, base your eating pattern on these recommendations:

- Choose [lean meats and poultry](#) without skin and prepare them without added saturated and [trans](#) fat.
- Eat fish at least twice a week. Recent research shows that eating [oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids](#) (for example, salmon, trout and herring) may help lower your risk of death from [coronary artery disease](#).
- Select fat-free, 1 percent fat and low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce [trans fat](#) in your diet.
- To lower [cholesterol](#), reduce [saturated fat](#) to no more than 5 to 6 percent of total calories. For someone eating 2,000 calories a day, that's about 13 grams of saturated fat.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with [added sugars](#).
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. To lower [blood pressure](#), aim to eat no more than 2,400 milligrams of [sodium](#) per day. Reducing daily intake to 1,500 mg is desirable because it can lower blood pressure even further.
- If you drink [alcohol](#), drink in moderation. That means one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man.
- Follow the American Heart Association recommendations when you eat out, and keep an eye on your [portion sizes](#).

Also, don't smoke tobacco — and avoid secondhand smoke.

Learn more about [quitting smoking](#)