

Comparing Heart-Healthy Diets

You can choose from several eating plans to help keep your heart healthy. All of the eating plans listed below are good for the heart. But you may have a hard time knowing which one might be right for you.

One diet helps lower blood pressure, while another lowers cholesterol. A couple of the diet plans lower both blood pressure and cholesterol. Make sure to talk with your doctor before you choose an eating plan.

If your doctor says that any of these plans is a good choice for you, you can pick one based on the kind of foods you like to eat.

| DASH | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| What it is | What it does | What to eat | What to limit or avoid |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension • Involves limiting sodium (salt) • Allows 27% of daily calories from fats • High in potassium, magnesium and calcium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lower blood pressure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 servings each day of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products • 4 to 5 servings of fruit each day • 4 to 5 servings of vegetables each day • No more than 2 servings each day of lean meat, poultry or fish • 7 to 8 servings of whole grains each day • 4 to 5 servings of legumes, nuts and seeds each week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processed foods (such as snack items, lunch meats, and canned soups) • Saturated fat (in meats and dairy products, especially red meat) |
| TLC | | | |
| What it is | What it does | What to eat | What to limit or avoid |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TLC stands for Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes • Allows 25% to 35% of daily calories from fat, mainly from unsaturated fat • Involves eating a low-fat diet by limiting meat and milk products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lower LDL cholesterol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 to 3 servings each day of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products • 2 to 4 servings of fruit each day • 3 to 5 servings of vegetables each day • At least 6 servings each day of bread, cereals, pasta, rice, and other grains • No more than 5 ounces each day of lean meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, or dry peas. (3 ounces of meat is the size of a deck of cards.) • No more than 2 egg yolks each week. Any amount of egg whites or egg substitute is fine • Monounsaturated oils, such as olive, canola, or peanut oil | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturated fats, such as those found in meat and higher-fat dairy products • High-fat fast foods |

Mediterranean-Style

| What it is | What it does | What to eat | What to limit or avoid |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a style of eating, rather than a formal diet plan. It refers to foods often eaten in Greece, Italy, France, and Spain. Allows 35% to 40% of daily calories from fat, mainly from unsaturated oils, such as fish oils, olive oil, and certain nut or seed oils (canola, soybean, or flaxseed oil) High in fiber May include 1 glass each day of red wine for women, up to 2 glasses for men | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can lower cholesterol and blood pressure May reduce the chance of a second heart attack and death in people who have had a heart attack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish Fruits (including as dessert) Vegetables Beans High-fiber grains and breads Olive oils Foods high in linolenic acid (such as walnuts, flaxseeds, flaxseed oil, and canola oil) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meats, cheeses, and sweets |

American Heart Association

| What it is | What it does | What to eat | What to limit or avoid |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to the TLC diet Allows 25% to 30% of daily calories from fat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can lower cholesterol and blood pressure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish at least 2 times a week, especially oily fish like tuna, salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, and sardines Variety of dark green, deep orange, or yellow fruits and vegetables, such as spinach, carrots, peaches, and berries 25 to 30 grams of fiber each day from whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes Fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat dairy products Liquid vegetable oils and soft margarines in place of hard margarine or shortening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processed food (such as lunch meats and baked goods and other snacks made with partially hydrogenated or saturated fats) Cholesterol. Limit to less than 300 mg a day. (An egg has about 200 mg in its yolk) Little or no added salt. Aim for less than 2,300 mg of sodium a day. Some people may need to have much less than that. |