



Flexible Meal Planning for Heart Health

- **Eat three meals daily.** Meals should be 4-5 hours apart. Eat a snack if a meal is missed.
- **A meal should include:**
 - A whole grain or a starchy vegetable and a fruit for energy and fiber
 - A non-starchy vegetable (1 cup or more per meal) for vitamins, minerals, & fiber
 - A plant-based protein, low fat dairy, lean meat/poultry, or fish for protein
- **Add fiber as whole grains and vegetables to every meal.** *Goal intake is 25-35 grams per day.* Vegetables, beans, barley, and oats are the best options. Choose breads with 2 grams of fiber or more per slice, cereals with 3 grams of fiber or more per serving.
- **Eat a food containing a protein at each meal.** Nuts, seeds, soy, beans, lentils, low fat dairy, fish, lean meat/poultry at all good choices.
- **Avoid deep fat fried foods and foods high in saturated animal fat.** Avoid bologna, bacon, sausage, salami, butter, sour cream, heavily marbled meats, etc., unless labeled low fat.
- **Limit salty foods and added salt.** Season with herbs, salt-free spice mixes, peppers, onion, garlic, vinegar, lemon, and liquid smoke. Be aware of the sodium content in processed foods.
- **Limit simple sugars and sweetened beverages.** Have foods and beverages with added sugar in moderation. Try sugar-free packets, lemon, or lime to flavor your beverages.
- **Eat fish at least twice a week.** The best sources of omega-3 fatty acids are salmon, tuna, herring and sardines.
- **Some fat is essential.** Use monounsaturated fats (olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil), as well as nuts to replace saturated fat. Choose margarine in the tub, natural peanut butter, and reduced fat salad dressings.
- **Select low fat dairy products.** Drink 2 glasses of milk, or eat cheese or yogurt daily. These should include fat free (skim) or 1% milk. Use "low fat", "reduced fat" cheeses and keep the "added sugars" in yogurt to 9 grams or less per serving.
- **Drink a minimum of 64 ounces (eight – 8 ounce glasses) of water daily, unless your doctor gave you a fluid restriction.** Calorie free beverages may be included; limit caffeinated beverages (do not exceed 400 mg caffeine daily).
- **Snacks should be nutritious.** Ideal snacks include whole grain crackers, vegetables, yogurt with 9 grams or less of added sugar, whole grain cereal and milk, and light popcorn.
- **To help with weight loss,** cut down on portion sizes, drink water between meals, and start each meal with a salad or low-sodium broth-based soup. Do not skip meals!



Shopping List:

- Water, sugar free flavored waters e.g. Crystal Light®, Bubly®, Mio®
- Diet/light juices e.g. Light Ocean Spray®, Diet V8 Splash®
- Oat bran, whole wheat or multi-grain bread, 2 grams fiber or more per slice
- Whole grain, low sugar cereal—6 grams sugar or less and 3 grams fiber or more per serving
- Whole grain pasta e.g. Healthy Harvest® pasta or Barilla® Protein Pasta
- Quinoa
- Brown rice
- Fruit- fresh, frozen, or canned in 100% fruit juice
- Vegetables- fresh, frozen, or canned with no salt added
- Reduced fat or fat free olive oil/vinegar based salad dressings
- Reduced fat or fat free mayo
- Natural peanut butter
- Unsalted nuts
- Olive, canola, and/or peanut oil
- Cooking spray e.g. Pam®
- Tub margarine or margarine in the pump bottle
- Skim, 1%, or soy milk
- Yogurt with 9 grams or less of added sugar e.g Okios® Triple Zero
- Reduced fat cheese
- Soy foods e.g tofu, edamame
- Dried beans and lentils or canned beans with no salt added
- Lean meat e.g round steaks, top loin, top sirloin, at least 90% lean ground beef
- Lean poultry e.g at least 90% lean ground turkey or chicken, chicken breast, etc.
- Fish- fresh, frozen, or canned in water
- Sugar-free Jell-O®
- Light popcorn
- No sugar added low fat ice cream
- Sugar free popsicles
- Reduced Fat crackers e.g. Triscuit®, Wheat Thins®
- Sodium free seasonings e.g. Mrs. Dash®
- Hot sauce e.g. Texas Pete®
- Non-nutritive sweeteners e.g. Splenda®, Truvia®, Equal®

