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A balanced diet is important for heart health.

Life habits such as eating a healthy diet and being physically active may prevent up to 80% of premature cases of heart disease and stroke.

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Choosing foods that help your heart health is important to manage type 2 diabetes and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Benefits of a Heart-Healthy Diet

Choosing the right foods will do more than just help out your heart health, but can also:

- Control your blood sugar levels
- Manage your weight
- Lower your cholesterol

Physical activity is an important part of managing type 2 diabetes.

1. Eat fruits and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide helpful nutrients (antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and fibre) and can keep you feeling full longer.

Some popular heart-healthy fruits and vegetables include:

- Leafy green vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens)
 - Berries (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries)
 - Avocados
 - Tomatoes
2. Choose whole grains over refined grains

Whole grain foods provide fibre, protein and B vitamins that will help you stay full and healthy longer.

Some examples of whole grain foods include:

- Whole grain bread or crackers
- Brown or wild rice
- Quinoa
- Oatmeal
- Hulled barley

3. Pay attention to protein

Protein is essential for building and maintaining muscle, bones, and skin. Eating protein daily is essential in maintaining a diet that will improve your heart health.

Heart-healthy meat and fish proteins include:

- Fish (such as mackerel)
- Shellfish
- Poultry (chicken, turkey)
- Lean red meats

Examples of heart-healthy alternative proteins are:

- Legumes (such as chick peas or lentils)
- Beans (Kidney or black)
- Nuts (almonds)
- Seeds (chia seeds, flaxseeds, hemp seeds)
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Low-fat and low-sodium dairy (milk, yogurt, kefir, cheese)

4. Drink lots of water

Water is a key source of hydration, without added calories or sugars. Replacing fruit drinks or water can help lower blood sugar. If you don't like the taste of water try adding lemon or lime to add more flavour. Ideally, men should drink around 3 litres of water a day and women should drink 2 litres.

With helpful tips and recipes, you can enjoy eating the right foods to protect your heart health. Being mindful of what you are eating doesn't require a complete diet overhaul or mean that your meals need to lack flavor. Simple food swaps can make your favourite dishes "diabetes-friendly". [See here](#) for more nutrition information, recipes, grocery and meal planning tips.

"Grocery aisles can be overwhelming. Stick to the sides of the grocery store to find the fresh and perishable items such as fruits, vegetables, protein and dairy."

– **Mark McEwan**



Mental Health

Being diagnosed with diabetes can sometimes take a toll on your mental health. But there are ways to cope, and to thrive.

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