

An Optimal Diet for Preventing Heart Disease

Research experts review nearly 150 studies evaluate the role of diet in preventing heart disease.

Researchers worldwide are working to discover ways to prevent and treat our number one killer, heart disease. From previous research over the past century, we are very aware of the strong link between diet and heart disease. However, amidst all of the studies, findings, and discoveries, we want to know what works, what doesn't, and where we still need more research.

Two renowned nutrition experts and researchers have reviewed 147 original studies and larger reviews to determine what we know today about the link between diet and heart disease and to provide important, science-based recommendations on what we can do to reduce the risk of this deadly disease.

Based on the most compelling evidence available, researchers revealed several characteristics of what they call *optimal diets* for preventing heart disease.

- Use more unsaturated fats, especially polyunsaturated fats, *in place of* saturated and trans-fats. Unsaturated fats come from nuts, avocados, most vegetable oils and olive oil. Red meat and high-fat poultry and cheese are high in saturated fats. Most refined, baked goods are high in trans-fats (hydrogenated oils).
- Increase intake of omega-3 fats from fish oils or plant sources. Deep, cold water fish like salmon and mackerel are high in omega-3 fats.
- Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and *whole* grains and low in refined grains. Look for the word, “whole” on breads and crackers. Most packaged foods are highly refined or contain refined grains.

Based on this extensive review, following these recommendations—in addition to regular exercise, a healthy body weight, and avoiding tobacco—may dramatically reduce the risk of heart disease in most individuals.

References:

Hu FB, Willett WC. (2002) Optimal Diets for Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease. *JAMA*, 288: 2569-2578.