

# HEALTH FACTS & FIGURES

## Adopt A Better Diet To Improve Heart Health

(NAPS)—Research is increasingly supporting the age-old notion that good nutrition and good health go hand in hand. Healthy eating habits can even help battle America's number one killer—heart disease.

A healthy, balanced diet can help reduce three of the major risk factors for heart attack—high cholesterol, high blood pressure and excess body weight. Better eating can also help reduce risk of stroke, as heart disease and high blood pressure are the major risk factors.

The American Heart Association recently updated and released new dietary guidelines incorporating the latest in nutritional science. Following an eating plan based on these guidelines can help you achieve and maintain a healthy eating pattern. The benefits include a healthy body weight, a desirable blood cholesterol level and a normal blood pressure.

- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits. Choose five or more servings per day.
- Eat a variety of grain products, including whole grains. Choose six or more servings per day.
- Include fat-free and low-fat milk products, fish, legumes (beans), skinless poultry and lean meats.
- Choose fats with two grams or less saturated fat per serving, such as liquid and tub margarine, canola oil and olive oil.
- Limit foods high in saturated fat, transfat and/or cholesterol, such as full-fat milk products, fatty meats, tropical oils, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and egg yolks.
- Eat less than six grams of salt per day (2,400 milligrams of sodium).
- Have no more than one alcoholic drink per day if you're a woman, two if you're a man.

Look for products with the



**Healthy, nutritious food is easy to find. Just look for the AHA heart-check mark.**

American Heart Association's red and white heart-check mark in the grocery store. It's a quick and easy way to find foods that can be part of a sensible eating plan. All foods with the heart-check mark are low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium and can be part of a heart-healthy diet.

Dietary changes based on selecting foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol can lower blood cholesterol by 10 to 15 percent. That, in turn, can reduce the risk for heart disease by 20 to 30 percent. In addition, eating a diet that contains three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods and seven to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day has been shown to reduce systolic (the top/higher number) blood pressure by 5.5 points and diastolic (the bottom/lower number) blood pressure by 3.0 points. That cuts the incidence of heart disease by 15 percent and the incidence of stroke by 27 percent.

To learn more about reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke, you can visit the American Heart Association Web site at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org), or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 for your free copy of their "Shop Smart with Heart" brochure.

---

*Note to Editors: Although this story may be used at any time, March is National Nutrition Month.*