

FOODS TO EAT TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE, ACCORDING TO A DIETITIAN

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In case you haven't heard, cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women in Singapore. But taking care of your precious organ, that beating, thumping, life-giving muscle, is a lot easier than you might think. In fact, simply making the right tweaks to your diet can reduce your risk of getting a heart attack and prevent heart disease.



Jaclyn Reutens, 35, a dietitian and the founder of APTIMA Nutrition & Sports Consultants, sheds light on what makes up a diet that's good for your heart. She also reveals what hawker foods are heart-healthy (and vice versa)!

Find out the best foods for your ticker below:



1. Go for whole grains

"Wholegrains help to reduce cholesterol levels and can be easily incorporated into our diet. They are high in potassium which reduces blood pressure; another risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Plus, they help keep you satiated and thus reduce the urge to snack!"

What to eat: Wholemeal bread, brown rice, oats, quinoa, cereals including bran, bran flakes, wholewheat pasta and barley.



2. Eat more fatty fish

"Fish, especially fatty fish, are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids that decreases inflammation of the arteries. Fish is also an excellent source of lean protein as compared to other sources of protein like chicken, beef, pork, mutton, and lamb."

What to eat: Tuna and salmon



3. Some fat is good for you

"Choose monounsaturated fats to improve heart health as these good fats help reduce total cholesterol levels. On the other hand, saturated fats increase bad cholesterol (LDL cholesterol) levels which increase the formation of plaque along arterial walls. This narrows the walls, which increases risk of a heart attack. Bad fats are found in animal products like chicken skin, fatty meats and highly processed foods like bacon, nuggets, burgers, as well as in full-fat dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt."

What to eat: Olive oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, nuts, seeds.



4. Up your intake of fresh fruits and veggies

"These foods are high in both soluble and insoluble fibre, as well as antioxidants that reduce inflammation and oxidation of plaque. Fruits and vegetables are also the best sources of potassium!"



5. Cut down on salty food

"Sodium increase blood pressure and is found in highly salted foods. These include preserved foods, fast foods, tidbits, stock cubes, canned or bottled sauces (unless stated otherwise), highly processed meats such as sausages, nuggets, salami, burger patties, bacon, luncheon meat and corned beef. Try to limit salt in cooking, and omit it if possible. Try substituting salt with herbs and spices."



6. Choose wisely at the hawker centre

"Our local fare can go both ways. Make the good choices at least 90% of the time and your heart will thank you for it!"

Hawker foods to avoid: laksa, lontong, curries and gravies with coconut milk, nasi lemak and desserts with coconut milk such as chendol and bubur chacha.

The good choices include:

Soupy foods: Noodles in soup (wanton noodles, fishball noodles), herbal soups served with rice, porridge, yong tau foo, sliced fish soup.

Economy rice/Nasi Padang: Pick one fish/chicken/pork/tofu dish that is not deep-fried + 2 vegetable dishes.

Char siew rice: Ask for the leaner cuts and a side of vegetables.

Chicken rice: Only if you switch the rice to the plain rice and ask for a side order of vegetables.

Indian food: Pick a roti/thosai + dhal + vegetables. Avoid pratas, murtabak, mutton, gravies with coconut milk.

Fruits: Most hawker centres have a fruit stall, so order one to two servings of fruit to end off your meal and complete your balanced diet."

Text: Elizabeth Liew

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