

Six Pillars for Heart Health

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a multidimensional role in cardiovascular health and can have an effect on:

Blood lipid (LDL and HDL cholesterol, and triglycerides) levels and oxidation

Endothelial (the inner lining of blood vessels) function

Blood pressure

Insulin levels and insulin resistance

Inflammation

Reduce Added Sugar

Reducing added sugars is an important consideration for heart health (and overall health). The target for overall health is no more than 5 to 10% of calories from added sugars.



Cookies / Wafers



Liquid sweeteners such as maple syrup, agave, and honey



Chocolates / Candy



Cakes / Pies

Sodium & Blood Pressure

Strong evidence supports reducing sodium intake, especially as part of a healthy dietary pattern.

There is moderate evidence for:

- Reducing sodium intake to < 2300 mg/day
- Reducing sodium by at least 1000 mg/day to lower BP even if the recommended sodium intake is not reached
- Reducing sodium intake to 1500 mg/day may lead to a greater decrease in BP



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Finding Sodium

According to the American Heart Association, six common foods contribute 42% of the average U.S. sodium intake. These are known as the 'Salty Six':

Understanding FDA-approved nutrition claims on labels can help you make informed choices. Here's what some common terms mean:

- Salt/Sodium-Free: less than 5 mg in a serving
- Very Low Sodium: 35 mg or less in a serving
- Low Sodium: 140 mg or less in a serving
- Reduced Sodium: at least 25% less Sodium than the "regular" version of the product
- Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted: at least 50% less Sodium than the "regular" version of the product



Sandwiches



Pizza



Bread



Soup



Poultry



Deli Meats

DASH Diet

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is effective at all blood pressure levels but has the greatest effect in people with high blood pressure or people who consume a high-sodium diet. Key features of the DASH diet include:

- Predominantly plant-focused as compared to a standard Western diet
- Calorie balance for a healthy weight
- Long-term habits
- Supports overall health by incorporating exercise and stress management.

Pulses

Pulses are the edible seeds of legumes, including dried peas, lentils, chickpeas, and beans such as black beans, kidney beans, and navy beans. They are high in protein and fiber while being naturally low in fat.

- They promote healthy blood sugar
- Research from 25 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) found that eating pulses daily can lower LDL ('bad') cholesterol by at least 5%.
- Pulses can support weight loss and maintenance. Their viscous fiber slows digestion, keeping you full longer.

