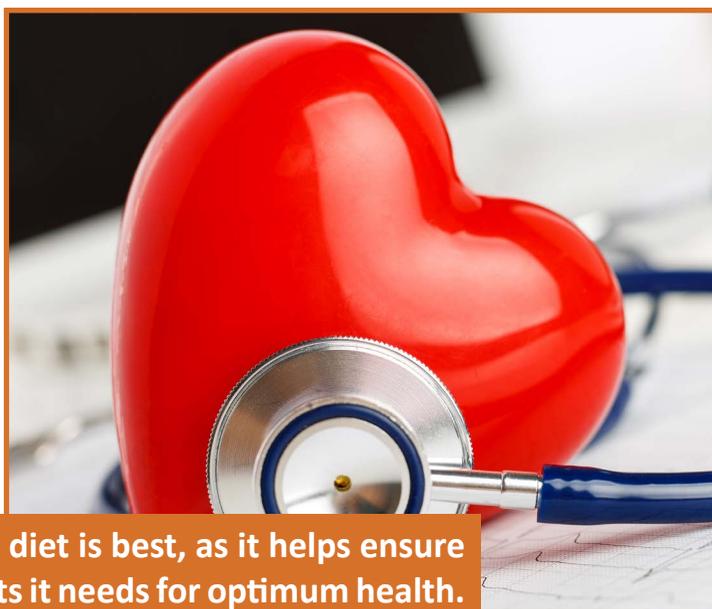


Foods that your heart loves



To take care of your heart, a balanced diet is best, as it helps ensure that your body receives all the nutrients it needs for optimum health. Try these heart-healthy foods for a strong and healthy ticker.

Seven foods that benefit your heart

About 80% of all cardiovascular disease can be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle, according to the World Health Organisation. Eating healthily is one of the most important things you can do to keep your heart strong, along with exercising and avoiding unhealthy habits, like smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

Include the following foods:

1. Wholegrain and high-fibre foods provide good sources of vitamins, minerals, and fibre, which fills you up so that you don't get hungry between meals. This helps with managing your weight and lowering the risk of heart disease, which is often caused by obesity. You need three to five servings a day for better health.

Good choices: Wholewheat breads, crackers, and pastas, brown rice, oats, high-fibre cereals, and legumes.

2. Five or more servings of vegetables and fruit a day provide your body with vital nutrients and fibre. They are also naturally low in fat, cholesterol, and salt, which should all be limited for a healthier heart.

3. Fish, which is high in omega 3 fatty acids, should be eaten at least twice a week. It helps

lower cholesterol levels and reduces the risk for heart disease.

Good choices: Snoek, sardines, tuna, pilchards, mackerel, and salmon.

4. Lean meats or chicken are better choices than fatty or processed meats, which are often high in salt and unhealthy fats. Limit lean red meat to two to three times per week.

5. Low-fat or fat-free dairy products are rich in potassium and calcium, which may help lower blood pressure and support your heart. According to the South African Heart and Stroke Foundation, calcium supports the heart muscle. Eat at least two servings per day.

6. A handful of nuts a day can save your life, says a study in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*. Researchers found that people who ate nuts had a decreased risk of death from cardiovascular disease. Nuts are rich in healthy fats and antioxidants.

7. Five or more glasses of water a day may benefit your heart. According to a study at Loma Lida University, men who drank five glasses of water a day were 54% less likely to suffer a fatal heart attack.

Love your heart by eating a healthy balanced diet every day!