7 HEART HEALTHY EATING HACKS

The health of your cardiovascular system is vital to your overall health. Therefore, focus on keeping your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar in a healthy range.

1. Optimize proteins. Eat less processed red meat (i.e., bacon, sausage and pepperoni), trim visible fats from red meat. Choose breast or loin cuts (i.e., pork or beef tenderloin.)

2. Get fiber. Plant foods contain fiber. Add in beans, peas and lentils; vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

3. Use herbs and spices. Replace some of the salt in your meals and snacks with flavorful, aromatic fresh or dried plants.

4. Sweeten foods yourself to cut your sugar intake. Drizzle pure maple syrup, raw honey or agave nectar into your coffee, tea, oatmeal, toast and/or pancakes.

5. Eat healthy fats. Avocados, nuts, seeds and fatty fish, such as salmon, halibut, tuna and/or extra-virgin olive oil.

6. Eat more color-filled plants. Think green, red, orange, purple, blue and black vegetables and fruits for more plant compounds.

7. Watch portion sizes. By eating until '80 percent full' and not overeating at any one time, you can keep your waistline in check and lose weight, if necessary.

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