FEBRUARY IS HEART MONTH: EAT FOR A HEALTHY HEART

Changing your eating habits can be difficult, but it is important to keep your heart healthy. American Heart Month is a great time to start making some changes. The following is a list of suggestions to start and maintain a heart healthy diet.

1. **Control Portion Size**: The amount you eat is as important as what you eat. Overloading your plate and stuffing yourself past being full adds calories and can lead to weight gain. Control this by using serving sizes: 1 serving of meat=4 ounces (about the size of your palm); 1 serving of vegetable, potato, rice, or pasta=1/2 cup; 1 serving of fruit=1 medium piece or ½ cup; 1 serving of milk=1 cup; and 1 serving of bread=1 slice.

2. **Eat More Fruits and Vegetables**: Fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals, are low in fat and calories, and have antioxidants that help with heart disease. Keep fruits and vegetables cut and washed in the refrigerator for a quick snack and include them in recipes, such as vegetable stir fry.

3. **Choose Whole Grains**: Whole grains have fiber, which improves blood pressure. Try a new whole grain weekly. Examples include couscous, quinoa, barley, whole-wheat pasta, or brown rice (these grains can be found in the rice section of the grocery store). Look for 3 or more grams of fiber on the food label.

4. **Limit Unhealthy Fats and Cholesterol**: Cholesterol is found in animal products such as beef, eggs, butter, whole milk, and whole fat cheeses and can lead to buildup of plaque in your arteries. Saturated fat is unhealthy. It is found in fatty beef, skin of chicken, butter, cheese, whole milk, and cream. Another unhealthy fat is trans fat, found in hydrogenated oils used in fried foods, such as doughnuts, and baked goods such as cakes, pie crusts, frozen pizza, and cookies.

5. **Choose Low-Fat Protein Sources**: These include skinless and white chicken or turkey, fish, low-fat milk and cheese, egg whites or egg substitutes, tofu, beans, peas, and lentils. Some cold-water fish are high in healthy fats, which can help with heart disease. Try salmon, mackerel, and herring weekly.

6. **Lower the Sodium**: 75% of sodium intake comes from canned and processed foods, and only 25% from the saltshaker. Low sodium seasoning ideas include herbs, spices, lemon, garlic, and onion. Look for canned foods without added salt, and rinse canned vegetables and beans before use. On the food label look for less than 300mg per serving.

7. **Plan Ahead by Creating a Weekly Menu**: By planning ahead you are able to make the healthiest choices. Include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in every meal or snack. For example, cook salmon filet topped with peach salsa and serve with steamed broccoli and brown rice.

Source: www.mayoclinic.org