

# EATING FOR HEART HEALTH

## Fact sheet

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is a collective term for the conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. The most common one is atherosclerosis which is a hardening of the arteries. CVD is still Australia's greatest health problem<sup>1,2</sup>.



### WHAT CAUSES CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE?

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Atherosclerosis is a narrowing of the arteries caused by a build up of fatty materials (fats and cholesterol) in the blood vessel walls. This makes the blood vessels less elastic and reduces the blood flow to vital organs. If a blockage occurs, stopping the flow of oxygen containing blood to the organs, a heart attack or stroke can occur<sup>3</sup>.

There are many factors associated with the development of CVD, some of which we can change.

<i>What you can change?</i>	<i>What you can't change?</i>
Smoking High blood pressure High cholesterol Overweight Poor diet Type 2 diabetes Insufficient activity	Family history of CVD Age Gender Body shape (e.g. "Apple" shape has a higher risk than "Pear" shape.)

Eighty percent of adult Australians have at least one of these risk factors. Those with more than one risk factor are at higher risk of developing CVD<sup>4</sup>.

### YOUR DIET CAN AFFECT YOUR HEART HEALTH

#### Fats

Saturated and trans fats can increase blood cholesterol levels. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated (omega 3 and omega 6) fats help lower cholesterol levels<sup>5</sup>. For heart health, reduce saturated fats and substitute them for unsaturated fats in your diet.

Healthy heart tips:

- ✓ Use margarine instead of butter.
- ✓ Remove the skin off chicken, use trim cuts of meat and avoid processed meats
- ✓ Choose low fat milk, yoghurt, and cheese
- ✓ Keep pastries and biscuits for special occasions only.
- ✓ Include fish in your meals at least twice per week.

#### Energy Balance

Eating more kilojoules (energy) than you burn through activity leads to weight gain.

For heart health, aim to keep your weight in the healthy weight range by choosing foods low in energy (kilojoules) and high in nutrients.

Healthy heart tip:

- ✓ Eat less foods high in fat and sugar and reduce the portion size of your meals. Include regular activity, but consult your doctor before starting an exercise program.



# EATING FOR HEART HEALTH (continued)

## Fact sheet Fact sheet



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Nestlé has always maintained a commitment to advances in nutrition and is continuing this through its partnership with the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)

### Salt

There is clear evidence linking high salt intake with increased blood pressure. High blood pressure places increased stress on the heart<sup>6</sup>. For heart health, if you have high blood pressure, have your blood pressure monitored regularly and limit the amount of salt that you eat. (see salt fact sheet)

Healthy heart tips:

- ✓ Don't add salt to cooking and don't put the salt shaker on the table.
- ✓ Improve the flavor of food by using lemon juice, fresh herbs or spices in place of salt.
- ✓ Choose unsalted nuts or unsalted popcorn.

### Fibre

Soluble fibre helps maintain healthy blood fat levels by helping reduce cholesterol absorption. For heart health, choose foods with soluble fibre, like wholegrain breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables such as legumes.

Healthy heart tip:

- ✓ Start the day with wholegrain cereal, oats or baked beans on wholegrain toast.
- ✓ Include legumes by adding hummus to sandwiches, or adding mixed beans to salads.

### Antioxidants

Foods high in antioxidants can reduce the risk of developing CVD. Antioxidants are known to help prevent the build up of the fatty deposits in the arteries<sup>6</sup>.

For heart health, enjoy a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables, nuts and anti - oxidant containing drinks like tea, coffee and cocoa.

Healthy heart tips:

- ✓ Relax with a cup of green tea.
- ✓ Snack on fruit and at meal times fill half your plate with vegetables or salad
- ✓ Enjoy dark berries like blueberries and blackberries for a delicious dessert .
- ✓ Enjoy a couple of squares of dark chocolate as a treat

*Please refer to following fact sheets for more information: Salt, Facts on fat, Antioxidants, Omega 3 and Fibre.*

### References

1. Cardiovascular Health 2006. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/cvd/index.cfm>
2. Heart Foundation. Pharmaceutical Roundtable. Heart Foundation Pharmaceutical Roundtable Charter.
3. Cardiovascular Disease. <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/topics/cardiovascular.html>
4. Cardiovascular Disease. [http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/expert/cardiovascular\\_disease](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/expert/cardiovascular_disease)
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6. Baker Heart Research Institute Fact Sheet: Healthy Eating <http://baker.edu.au/content.aspx?topicsID=651>