



Hello!

As we step into February, the month dedicated to heart health, it's a chance for us to reflect on the strides we can take to enhance our cardiovascular well-being. While heart disease rates in Canada have seen a decline, thanks in part to advancements in research, pharmaceutical therapies, and preventive measures, certain risk factors persist.

Embarking on a journey to better heart health involves a series of lifestyle changes, both minor and significant. Incorporating healthier eating habits, ensuring proper sleep, engaging in regular physical activity, effectively managing stress, and moderating alcohol intake are key steps toward reducing your risk of heart disease.

Let's use this Heart Month as motivation to prioritize our cardiovascular health through mindful choices and sustainable habits.

Wishing you a heart-healthy February!



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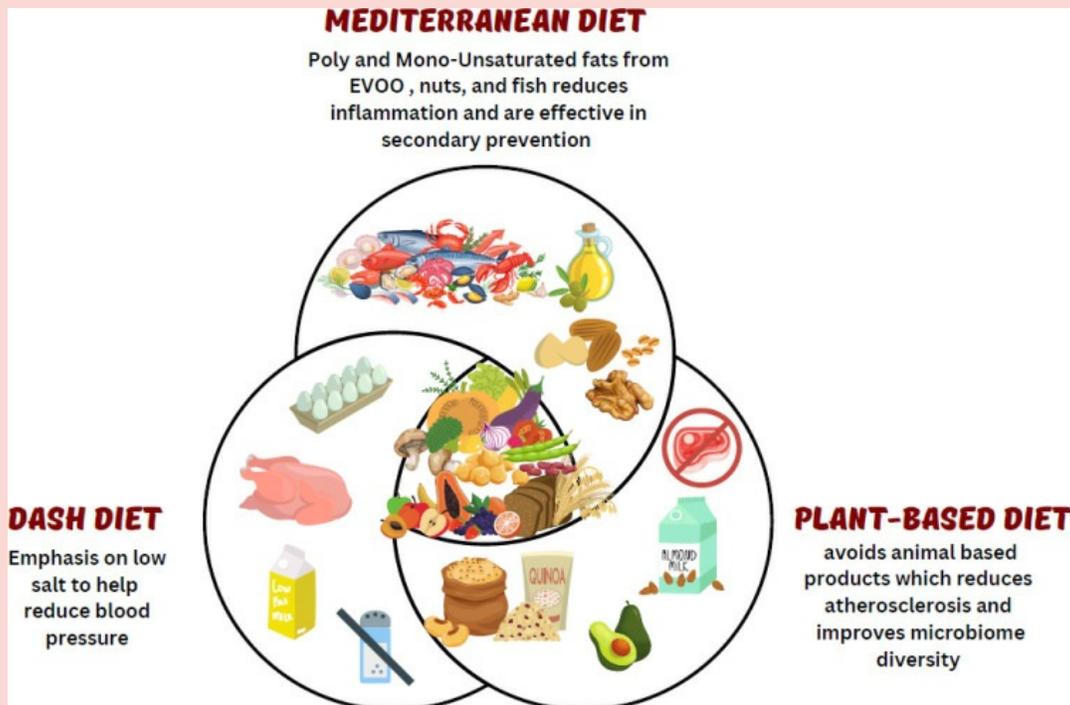
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Journal Club: A Heart-Healthy Diet for

Cardiovascular Disease Prevention

Diab et al., 2023 PMID: [37113563](#)



Managing cardio-metabolic risk factors emphasizes lifestyle modifications, with a key focus on dietary changes. It is crucial to comprehend the diverse impact of various diets on cardiovascular health, as this knowledge plays a pivotal role in guiding both primary and secondary prevention strategies for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Diets rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and lean protein sources, with minimization/avoidance of processed foods, trans-fats, and sugar sweetened beverages, are recommended by prevention guidelines. Specifically the Mediterranean Diet, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH diet) and plant based diets have the most proven cardio-protective benefits.

The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet, inspired by the eating patterns of countries around the Mediterranean Sea (e.g., Spain, Italy, Southern Greece), is characterized by a substantial inclusion of:

- whole grains
- leafy green vegetables
- fruits
- legumes
- unsalted nuts
- herbs
- spices
- extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
- moderate consumption of lean proteins like fish and poultry
- measured intake of alcohol
- restricts the consumption of red meat and sweets.

In essence, the Mediterranean diet inherently limits or excludes several components found in the typical American diet that contribute to cardiovascular disease (CVD) - such as saturated fats, highly processed refined grains and sugars, and excessive red meat.



The Mediterranean diet is considered beneficial because it includes a mix of healthy foods rather than just taking specific nutrients. It naturally gives antioxidants, lowers inflammation in blood vessels, affects certain genes linked to artery disease, changes the balance of gut bacteria, and improves cholesterol levels by lowering "bad" LDL cholesterol and increasing "good" HDL cholesterol.

The DASH Diet

In 1997, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute developed the DASH diet to address and manage hypertension, a recognized risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The DASH diet emphasizes the consumption of:

- fruits & vegetables
- low-fat dairy
- whole grains
- poultry & fish
- nuts, and seeds

While **minimizing** the intake of:

- fatty meats
- sweets
- sugar-sweetened beverages
- full-fat dairy products.

DASH Eating Plan

The Benefits: Lowers blood pressure & LDL "bad" cholesterol.

✔ Eat This	⚠ Limit This
 Vegetables	 Fatty meats
 Fruits	 Full-fat dairy
 Whole grains	 Sugar sweetened beverages
 Fat-free or low-fat dairy	 Sweets
 Fish	 Sodium intake
 Poultry	
 Beans	
 Nuts & seeds	
 Vegetable oils	

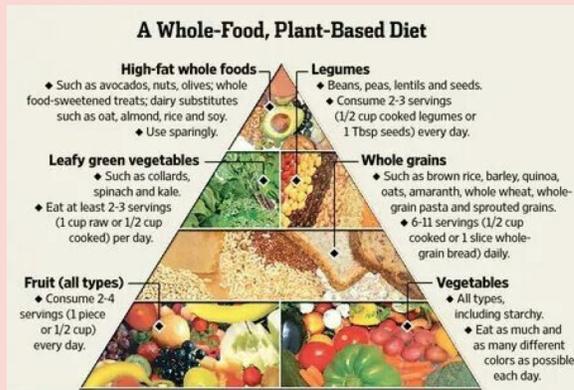
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/DASH





The typical DASH diet aims to keep salt intake at **2,300 mg** per day, aligning with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans' suggestion of limiting daily salt consumption.

Adopting the DASH diet brings about a noteworthy decrease in cardio-metabolic risk, impacting blood pressure, total cholesterol, and LDL-C. These factors are crucial in calculating the atherosclerotic CVD (ASCVD) risk score, ultimately leading to enhanced cardiac function and a reduced risk of diabetes. A key component of the DASH diet's effectiveness in lowering blood pressure is its focus on limiting sodium compared to other diets.



The Healthy Plant Based Diet

Plant-based eating plans exhibit a broad range, encompassing variations such as vegetarianism (excluding meat, poultry, seafood, and fish), veganism (omitting all animal products), lacto-vegetarianism (involving

dairy), lacto-ovo-vegetarianism (involving dairy and eggs), pesco-vegetarianism or pescatarianism (involving fish, dairy, and eggs), and semi-vegetarianism (excluding red meats, and potentially poultry).

A healthy plant-based diet centres around:

- whole grains
- fruits
- vegetables
- nuts
- legumes
- minimal animal foods.

It has low calories, less unhealthy fats, and lots of fibre. Fibre makes you feel full faster, aids digestion by slowing down stomach emptying, and keeps insulin and blood sugar levels moderate. Studies also suggest that following such a diet can improve cholesterol levels by increasing fibre intake, reducing overall fat absorption.

In Summary....

The Mediterranean, DASH, and healthy plant-based diets are quite similar. They all focus on fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and whole grains. Eating plenty of fruits and veggies is linked to a lower risk of heart disease and living longer. Whole grains and nuts also contribute to a lower risk of heart disease. All these diets emphasize eating minimally processed whole foods, as a poor diet is a major factor in heart and metabolic diseases worldwide.

Ultra-processed foods, which are high in unhealthy ingredients, can increase the risk of heart problems. They are often very tasty, making people eat more calories overall and may replace healthier foods like fruits and vegetables. Reducing the frequency of eating ultra-processed foods is a great first step towards a heart healthy diet.

Unlocking Health: Embracing the Mediterranean, DASH, and Plant-Based Diets for Vibrant Living



The choices you make in your daily diet have a profound impact on your overall health. A nutritious diet plays a crucial role in lowering your risk of heart disease by:

- Enhancing your cholesterol levels
- Lowering your blood pressure
- Managing your body weight
- Regulating your blood sugar

By understanding the connection between nutrition and well-being, you empower yourself to make informed choices that contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

Tips for Eating for a Healthy Heart

Meal Preparation:

- Opt for fresh, whole foods when preparing meals at home.
- Choose whole grains like oatmeal, quinoa, and brown rice for at least half of your grain servings.

Vegetables and Fruits:

- Fill half your plate with a variety of brightly coloured vegetables and fruits.
- Prioritize orange and dark green vegetables such as sweet potatoes and kale.
- Choose whole fruits over juices, and try unsweetened frozen or canned fruit in winter.

Hydration:

- Avoid sugary beverages like pop, sports drinks, and fruit juices.

Mindful Cooking:

- Use less sugar, salt, and fat when preparing meals.
- Replace salt with herbs and spices for flavour.
- Rinse canned vegetables and fruits to reduce added sugar or salt.

High-Fibre Choices:

- Increase fibre intake with vegetables, fruits with peels, and whole grains.
- Add bran, high-fibre cereal, or flaxseed to boost fibre content.

Limit Processed Foods:

- Minimize intake of highly processed foods.
- Be cautious of items like hot dogs, deli meats, cakes, candies, and fast food.
- Reduce consumption of refined foods such as white rice, bread, and pasta.

Remember, small changes in your eating habits can lead to significant improvements in heart health!

Did You Know????



Mangos are the most consumed fruit in the world.

Caesar Salad Isn't From Anywhere Near Italy!

The Caesar salad was actually invented in Tijuana, Mexico back in 1927. Hotel Caesar owner Caesar Cardini wanted to make dinner for friends, but didn't have much at hand. Lettuce was tossed into a bowl with a dressing made from whatever he had on hand and salad history was made.



Heart Healthy Recipes

Whether your planning a romantic meal for Valentine's day or celebrating Lunar New Year- these recipes are sure to be a hit!



Lentil Stuffed Mushrooms

[Click here for the full recipe](#)



Garlic Butter Cod with Lemon Asparagus Skillet

[Click here for the full recipe](#)



Chinese Shrimp Cakes



Smashed Cucumbers with Mustard Vinaigrette

Click [here](#) for the full recipe

Click [here](#) for the full recipe



Chocolate Walnut Brownies

Click [here](#) for the full recipe

Want to book an appointment with one of our
Registered Dietitians or
Social Workers?

Click [HERE](#)

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disease

Image 2: Med. Diet, Dash Diet + PBD: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.2147/VHRM.S379874>

Image 3: Mediterranean Diet- <https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

Image 4: DASH Diet- <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>

Image 5: Plant Based Diet-<https://plantbasedhealthprofessionals.com/plant-based-diet-index>

Image 6: Strong Heart Graphic- <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-protect-yourself-against-heart-and-vascular-disease>

Image 7: Mango- <https://www.libertyprim.com/en/lexique-familles/74/mango-lexique-des-exotic-fruits.htm>

Image 8: Caesar Salad- <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/caesar-salad-dressing>

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