

NUTRITION TOOLBOX TALKS



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™

Topic: Eat Smart

Title: March is National Nutrition Month!

National Nutrition Month focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits which is important in reaching and maintaining a healthy weight. A healthy weight reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes.

Eating healthier doesn't have to be hard or require you to give up all the foods you love.

Here are some simple ways you and your family can eat healthier:

INCLUDE

- Healthier snacks like fruits and vegetables instead of chips or cookies
- Whole grains like whole wheat bread instead of white bread
- Beans and legumes like chickpeas
- Nuts and seeds
- Fish (preferably oily fish with lots of omega-3 fatty acids like salmon or tuna), skinless poultry, instead of hamburgers or other red meat
- Choose low-fat and fat-free dairy products in your morning coffee

LIMIT

- Sweets and added sugars, especially sugary drinks like soda and instead drink fruit infused water or unsweetened tea
- Sodium and salt which can be found in packaged foods like chips, canned meat products, frozen and canned meals and fast food
- Saturated fat such as fatty cuts of meat and whole milk
- Fatty or processed meats – if you choose to eat meat, select leaner cuts like a chicken or turkey sandwich instead of a hamburger

Topic: Reduced Blood Sugar

Title: Added Sugar Is Not So Sweet

What are some of the most common added sugar sources?

- Sugar-sweetened beverages such as sports drinks, flavored juice, and energy drinks are the biggest source of added sugars in the American diet.
- Cakes
- Muffins
- Cookies
- Pies
- Ice Cream
- Candy
- Syrup
- Molasses
- Fruit juice

Eating and drinking a lot of added sugar is one cause of the obesity epidemic in the U.S. and increased risk of diabetes.

Slowly cut back the number of soda and energy drinks you consume. Instead of soda or energy drinks, try water with lime or lemon. Cut back on the number of sweet treats like ice cream and substitute desserts with naturally sweet and refreshing fruits like berries or watermelons.

Topic: Reduced Blood Sugar**Title:** Healthy Options to Replace added Sugars

- Enjoy fruit for dessert most days and limit traditional desserts to special occasions.
- Cut back on the amount of added sugars you eat and drink. Try reducing sodas or energy drinks slowly. Start with cutting back by 1 or 2 cans per week and then continue to decrease the amounts. Reducing soda and other sugary drinks can help you lose weight and reduce your blood pressure and your risks of type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Instead of soda, try unsweetened tea for a caffeine boost or adding fruit that contain natural sugars to your water.
- Buy 100% juice with no added sugars.
- Enhance foods with spices. Try cinnamon, nutmeg, mint or ginger.
- Add fresh or dried fruit to cereal and oatmeal.
- Drink plain or sparkling water, unsweetened tea or sugar-free beverages.

Topic: Manage Blood Pressure**Title:** The DASH eating plan

Hypertension is high blood pressure. High blood pressure/hypertension is a blood pressure reading of more than 120/80 mmHG. You can have high blood pressure/hypertension if any one of the numbers is higher than it should be. High blood pressure can increase your risk of a heart attack, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan is designed to help you manage blood pressure

Emphasizing healthy food sources, it also limits:

- Red meat
- Sodium (salt) which can be hidden in processed like frozen meals, deli or canned meat, chips, and other packaged products
- Sweets, added sugars, and sugar-containing beverages like soda and energy drinks

In addition to being easy to follow, delicious and varied, the DASH eating plan is proven effective.

Visit your primary care physician to talk about your health plan including a dietary plan and how to maintain a healthy blood pressure. Take advantage of wellness visits including your annual routine check-up visits.