



# Eating well and heart-healthy eating

*by Linda S. Rellergert*

The health-promotion, non-diet approach to eating encourages eating to promote good health without the use of diets or restrictive eating. A heart-healthy diet achieves the same effect. Sometimes, nutrition professionals get a little over zealous and make heart-healthy eating sound restrictive and joyless. Eating well is compatible with heart health if approached sensibly.

*Adopt what is known as the 80/20 rule. About 80% of the time choose lower fat meats, dairy foods, or use low-fat cooking techniques. Choose higher fat choices about 20% of the time.*

### **Long-term versus short-term.**

Heart-healthy eating may involve making some changes in eating for the rest of your life. Don't approach it as a short-term diet that you will end some day.

Most of the time, not ALL of the time, adopt what is known as the 80/20 rule. About 80% of the time choose lower fat meats, dairy foods, or use low-fat cooking techniques, and choose higher fat choices about 20% of the time.

Review your current eating habits. Maybe you're already following many of them and only need to make a few minor adjustments in food choices or preparation methods.

### **Take the slow and steady approach.**

Give some thought to making only one or two changes, giving yourself time to adjust and develop new habits before moving on to more. Research indicates you'll be more successful this way.

### **Are you eating enough?**

Most people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables, getting only 2-3 of the recommended minimum 5-a-day. Start by taking a piece of fresh fruit with you to

work every day to eat as a snack. Or, how about putting lettuce on your sandwich? Before you know it, you'll be getting 5-a-day on a regular basis.

### **Grab more grains.**

Whole grains contain many nutritional benefits: B vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They have a nutty flavor and chewy texture that makes eating enjoyable. Start out with some familiar ones like whole wheat, oats and brown rice before branching out to barley and bulgur. Try substituting about one-third whole wheat flour for white flour when baking. Eat more muffins, pancakes, or cookies that include oatmeal.

### **Which milk are you drinking?**

Whole milk contains a minimum of 3% butterfat. Many people find 2% milk is an acceptable alternative. After a few months of drinking 2%, try mixing 2% with 1% to reduce the fat content still more. Continue taking gradual steps down in fat content, giving the palate time to adjust in between. Try reduced-fat cheeses and sour cream too. The difference in taste may be undetectable in many recipes.



### **Here are some more ways to reduce the fat in your diet:**

- **Trim fat** from meat before cooking.
- **Use lean cuts of meat** more often. Lean cuts are taken from the loin or round instead of shoulder or rib. Look for the words loin or round when selecting a cut of meat.
- **Use lean cooking methods**- broil or grill, roast, simmer, stew.
- **Remove poultry skin** before cooking.
- **Use higher fat meats like sausage and bacon in small amounts** as more of a flavoring than as a full meat serving.
- **Bake or roast vegetables**, including French fries, rather than fry them.
- **Cut cakes and pies into smaller pieces** for serving, and then savor every bite.
- **Use sharp cheeses** to get more flavor with less cheese.
- **Add flavor** with chili peppers, herbs and spices.

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