Celebrate National Heart Health Month

In popular media and diets, nutrition tends to take a negative light—“don’t eat that”, “this food is bad”, “10 foods to avoid”—focusing on restriction, deprivation and outright elimination.

Sure, the intention of these messages is to ultimately protect health, but all this stress around eating can actually sabotage our health, including our heart health. There is a connection between stress and heart disease, and stress surrounding eating can be a contributor.

To honor national heart month, let’s shift from a negative “removal” approach to heart-smart eating and instead look at health through a positive “eat more of these foods” lens.

Fill Your Plate with Fruits & Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants and other phytochemicals that protect the heart from many angles. Plant foods provide fiber that helps lower cholesterol and phytochemicals that defend against inflammation. A good rule of thumb is to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables, the more variety and color, the better. Leave on skins, peels and include the seeds (when sensible) for added nutrition. Fruits and vegetables don’t have to be raw and fresh; frozen varieties are versatile, inexpensive and also very nutritious.

Tip: Start by looking for opportunities to mix fruits and vegetables into meals you already routinely make. Oatmeal for breakfast? Add a scoop of frozen berries or sliced banana. Lasagna, pizza or enchiladas for dinner? Add shredded carrots, mushrooms, zucchini, chopped spinach or peppers.

Serve up Seafood Twice a Week

Studies have shown a pattern between people who eat seafood and lower risk of heart disease. Seafood is a good source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids—heart-healthy fats that can lower triglyceride levels and blood pressure while protecting from plaque growth. Good options include salmon, tuna, mackerel and sardines, but all seafood contains omega-3 fatty acids. Aim to eat two 4-ounce servings of fish/seafood each week.

Tip: Canned salmon is less expensive than fresh, just as versatile as canned tuna, and is packed with protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Canned salmon can be used to make easy sushi bowls (mix with favorite hot sauce, sesame oil, green onions, jalapeno, avocado and serve over rice) or doctored up for quick fish tacos (salsa, cabbage slaw, guacamole, corn tortillas).
**Pick Plant Fats**

Heart-healthy plant fats including olive oil, canola oil, flaxseed oil, peanut oil, nuts, seeds and avocados can help to lower blood cholesterol and promote overall health. These fats are especially beneficial if they are used to replace saturated fats (the fats found in fried foods and animal products including bacon, butter, cream, cheese and more). Be cautious of marketing claims and fads focusing on coconut oil (technically a plant fat), which is actually considered a saturated fat. Palm oil, another tropical oil commonly found in processed foods, is also considered a saturated fat.

*Tip: Make your own salad dressing by mixing olive oil with any combination of lemon juice, garlic, herbs, balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar and Dijon mustard.*

**Switch to Whole grains**

Make at least half of your grains whole grains. Try to eat whole grain foods every day, including whole wheat breads and pastas, brown rice, wild rice, oatmeal, quinoa and barley. The less processed the grain, the more fiber intact, which in addition to lowering cholesterol, can also help promote satiety and gut health. Weight management and gut health play a role in heart health.

*Tip: Start by making simple switches in your current routine. Trade white rice for brown rice, white bread for whole wheat bread, white pasta for whole wheat pasta, quick-cook oatmeal for steel-cut oats. When looking at nutrition labels, pick products that use the word “whole” in the first ingredient. “Multi-grain” does not mean “whole grain”.*

**More Meatless Meals**

By eating more plant-based meals, you naturally boost the fiber content in your diet while also reducing saturated fat. Beans, nuts, seeds, lentils, legumes and soy foods can be used to supplement or substitute meat in a dish. These lean plant-based proteins have the added bonus of being less expensive than animal products, but just as protein-rich (and delicious!).

*Tip: Start by mixing plant proteins into dishes you routinely make. For example, if you’re making burgers, tacos or chili, mix ground meat with beans, lentils, soy crumbles or chopped walnuts.*

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**Putting It All Together**

Instead of focusing on cutting foods out of your diet, emphasize these nourishing foods in your meals. Small changes overtime will add up to big benefits for your health. Stress-free eating is remembering that all foods can fit into a healthy eating pattern—and that it’s what you eat the majority of the time that matters most. With this positive approach to heart-healthy eating, it’s important to still keep tabs on added sugars/sweeteners, sodium and saturated and trans fats, but the hope is that these nutrients get displaced when we take a “Eat-more-healthy-foods” approach.

*There is no one-size-fits all nutrition plan for healthy eating. Nutrition needs are unique to each individual and are based on energy needs, health conditions, age, sex and more.*
Try adding old fashioned oats in place of some of the flour for a more nutritious flapjack.

Serving Size: 1 4-inch pancakes
Yield: 8 pancakes

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup buckwheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder (low sodium)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 ¼ cups milk (low-fat, almond, or milk of choice)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil or other vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

**Optional Mix-ins:**
- Blueberries, sliced apples, bananas, or other fruit
- Dried cranberries or raisins
- Shredded carrots
- Shredded coconut
- Chopped nuts
- Spices such as cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, nutmeg, or other

**Directions:**
1. Combine all dry ingredients in a large bowl (flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt).
2. In a separate bowl, whisk egg lightly. Add milk, oil and vanilla, and mix well.
3. Add liquid ingredients to the bowl of dry ingredients. Mix just until combined and moistened.
4. Add mix-ins as desired.
5. Lightly grease a skillet with butter or oil, and heat over medium high heat.
6. For each pancake, pour ¼ cup batter into the hot skillet. Turn once bubbles appear on pancakes and their edges look brown. Cook on second side briefly and remove to a plate.
7. Top with additional mix-ins or syrup, or enjoy as they are.

**Nutrition Information / Amount per serving:**

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<th>Calories</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Total fat</th>
<th>Total Carbohydrates</th>
<th>Saturated fat</th>
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**GET IN TOUCH ABOUT OTHER COOKING INFORMATION**
970.491.8615 | nutritioncenter.colostate.edu
Only a couple spots left! Valentine’s Date Night Cooking Class

Join us for a culinary celebration of Valentine's Day **Friday February 16th 6-8 pm**. Bring a partner for a fun evening of cooking a Kilwins Chocolate-infused meal of Eggplant Bruschetta di Cioccolato, Cacao Nib Balsamic Strawberry Salad, Savory Chocolate Chicken Mole, & Molten Cocoa Cakes.

Location: Gifford Building Room 237 on the CSU campus (502 W. Lake St.)

Cost: $75 per couple/pair

To register: please call (970) 495-5916 or [click here](#).

Now registering! Diabetes Empowerment

Do you have diabetes or provide care for someone who does? Join the Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center for Diabetes Empowerment, an 8-week nutrition, cooking and physical activity program designed to help manage diabetes (type 1, type 2 and gestational). This dietitian-designed and led program includes comprehensive nutrition classes with Q&A, group support, problem solving, hands-on cooking classes (meals included!), guided physical activity and more. Class begins **Wednesday March 21st 5:30-7:00 pm** and continues for 7 consecutive Wednesdays (8 classes total).

Call to register (970) 495-5916.

Now registering! Diabetes Prevention Program

Learn the behaviors and information you need to stop prediabetes from becoming diabetes. Our successful year-long program includes a master’s-level certified lifestyle coach, social support, weight loss support, comprehensive curriculum and fun hands-on activities. This program is now FREE for qualifying Anthem BCBS and UnitedHealthcare members. CSU classified employees, or non-Anthem subscribers can take the class for half price thanks to Commitment to Campus. Class begins **Monday March 26th 5:30-6:30** (orientation on Monday March 19th 7-8 pm). Call to register (970) 495-5916.

Now registering! Healthy You

Join us for this 8-week weight management and mindful eating program. From nutrition to meal planning, fitness to mindful eating, you’ll learn the step-by-step for making healthy choices.

Class begins **Tuesday, March 20th at 12pm-1pm** and continues for 7 consecutive Tuesdays.

Cost: $150 per participant

To register: please call (970) 495-5916 or [click here](#).

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