

Healthy food + active lifestyle = happy life

Our Arabic speaking community has a healthy tradition where eating good foods and being physically active are simply a way of life. However, with migration to Australia, fewer healthy foods are eaten and people exercise less, causing problems like heart disease and obesity. Many things in life are out of your control and in the hands of God, but there are steps you can take to prevent illness like heart disease.

Eat foods that may help prevent heart disease

These include fish, fruits and vegetables, bread and wholegrain foods (such as rice, pasta, bourghal, couscous) and legumes (such as lentils and chickpeas). Nuts are also good but buy raw and unsalted ones.

Keep you and your family healthy by:

- Eating fish at least twice a week
- Including meals that contain lentils and chickpeas
- Serving a salad or vegetables with the evening meal

Eat less fat that is bad for your heart

Some fats are good and some are bad for your heart. Vegetable oils like safflower, sunflower, olive, canola and corn oil, nuts (raw, unsalted are best), fish, olives and avocado contain fats that are good for your heart. Fatty meats, full cream milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter, ghee and coconut oil contain fats that are not good for your heart. Most meals and snacks bought outside the home such as kebab, chips, fried foods and meat pies also contain bad fats. Bad fats raise blood cholesterol increasing your risk of developing heart disease.

Eat less bad fat by:

- buying lean meat and mince and trimming the fat off meat

- removing the skin from chicken before eating
- buying low fat milk and yoghurt and reduced fat cheese
- using margarine instead of butter

Cook with vegetable oils at home

By using olive oil, corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil or canola oil in your cooking and on salads, you and your family will be healthier. Avoid using butter or ghee. It is good to reduce the amount of oil you use at home, especially if you are trying to lose weight

Teach your children good eating habits

Life-long healthy eating habits develop when we are children so it is important to have the right start. Encourage them to eat fruit and vegetables, pack healthy foods for school lunches, give them cold water to drink and encourage them to participate in sport and outdoor activities. Teaching good eating habits to your children will help prevent them developing an illness like heart disease when they are adults.

Be physically active every day

Make physical activity a part of your day, every day. Being active is good for your heart, helps with weight control and can make you feel happy and relaxed. Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes a day. Here are some ideas to keep you and your family healthy and strong.

- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Walk to the shops instead of taking the car.
- Be active with a friend or family member.
- Walk with your children to school.
- Use active areas in your neighbourhood such as bike and walking tracks.

For more information on eating healthy and being active to prevent heart disease, talk to your local doctor.