



# HEALTH NOTES



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## Food Choices to Fight Coronary Heart Disease

On February 19, 2018 there was an article by Thor Christensen in the Dallas Morning News that caught my attention. It sounded very much like the "Adventist Health Message" that we have been proclaiming for 150 years. It may take science a while to catch up to inspiration, but truth always comes out in the end.

Christensen reported on his interview with Amit Khera, MD, and James Parks, MD who are Cardiologists with the U.T. Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. Here is their summary of the dietary practices research shows will lower the risk of heart attacks and prolong life.

**Pack your plate with Fruits and Veggies.** "A plant-based diet with lots of fruits and vegetables is a very heart-healthy type of diet," Khera said. "There are lots of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber in them. The other thing is, when you're eating more fruits and vegetables, you're eating less of the bad things." The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends filling half your plate with fruits and veggies at every meal.

**Limit Saturated Fat.** Saturated fat is found in animal-based foods like butter, cheese, whole milk and meat. Although there are reports that saturated fat might not be quite as bad as first thought, most experts still agree it's best to eat as little saturated fat as possible.

**The Steaks are High.** Red meat from cows, pigs, and sheep have more saturated fat than poultry and fish. "I tell patients to get rid of fatty meat and fast food, and if you are going to eat red meat, eat it only once every week or two," Park said. "Grass-fed beef is much healthier than corn-fed beef because it's leaner and it has a lot of iron."

**Eat like a squirrel.** Nuts and seeds are heart-healthy because they're filled with magnesium, protein and fiber. "They have good fats in them, too, so they don't raise cholesterol—and they keep you full," Khera said. "But they do have a lot of calories, so you can't eat handfuls of them if you're trying to lose weight." (In *Best Weigh* we recommend one small handful per day—one ounce is all you need daily to cut your risk of a heart attack in half.)

Nuts and seeds that are low in saturated fat include peanuts, walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts, pistachios, and sunflower seeds. Nuts that are higher in saturated fat include cashews, Brazil nuts, and macadamia nuts.



**Beans, beans, they're good for the heart.** Beans are high in protein, fiber and minerals, but without the saturated fat found in animal proteins. Beans may indeed be the "magical fruit," to quote the old children's rhyme.

There are scads of different legumes to choose from, but Dr. Park recommends darker-colored varieties that have more vitamins and minerals. These include black beans and dark kidney beans. "They're part of a healthy diet, and they offset our need for meat" Khera said. "We eat a lot of legumes in our family."

**Hide the shaker.** Human bodies need sodium but eating too much salt pulls water into your blood vessels, adding to high pressure. The problem is that most people find salt irresistible. The American Heart Association recommends healthy Americans eat no more than 2,300 milligrams of salt per day—about one level teaspoon—and people with high blood pressure should eat far less than that. The big challenge to avoiding salt is that it's found in almost all prepared foods.

**Keep a tight lip on your sweet tooth.** "Sweets are delicious, and we're all human, but nobody needs them," Khera said. "Highly processed sugars and sugar-sweetened beverages are pretty bad for weight gain and cardiovascular health."

**The hard-boiled truth about eggs.** Once derided as cholesterol-laden artery bombs, eggs have made a minor comeback in recent years. People who already have high cholesterol should still steer clear of egg yolks, "but if you have normal cholesterol, it's not a bad thing to eat eggs—not four a day, but maybe a few a week is reasonable," Kera said. "Like everything in life, it should be in moderation."

