



Go further with food for heart health

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This year's theme for National Nutrition Month is "Go Further with Food," which encourages a selection of health-promoting foods while at the same time being mindful of food waste. Given the wide variety of food choices, choosing the "right" foods can make a huge difference in one's health, including heart health. Health-promoting foods are those that provide more than just energy or calories; they include other nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber. These health-promoting nutrients can be found in every food group, especially whole grains/starches, fruits, vegetables, lean protein, low-fat/non-fat dairy (or non-dairy substitutes), and healthy fats/oils. It is important to incorporate foods from these different groups, and to consume fruits and vegetables of varying colors to increase intake of these vital nutrients.

One way to "Go Further with Food" is to choose foods that promote heart health. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet focuses on plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes (beans, lentils, peas, soybeans), and includes dairy, lean protein (fish and chicken) and fat from vegetable oils to reduce cardiovascular risks. The DASH diet is designed to lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol. It promotes reduced intake of saturated fats (fats that come from processed foods and some animal foods) and recommends low- or fat-free dairy sources. Because the DASH Diet aims to reduce hypertension, it limits sodium consumption. Finally, the DASH Diet emphasizes limiting sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets, which is vital to any healthy diet.

Embody the spirit of National Nutrition Month and "Go (even) Further with Food" by being mindful of the environment and minimizing food waste. By planning ahead—from shopping, to preparation, to serving, food waste can be reduced by taking only what is needed. The impact made by the food you choose and the amounts you buy can have a profound effect on both your health and the world we live in.

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