MedBen WellCare

benefitness for you.

Eating to Your Heart's Content

Diet is an important risk factor in coronary heart disease. And with heart disease being the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S. as well as most racial and ethnic groups a (and costing the U.S. $219 billion each year), diet is crucial.

Food-related risk factors including obesity, high blood pressure, uncontrolled diabetes and a diet high in saturated fats can contribute to disease. Therefore, eating a heart-healthy diet, rich with fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish, and whole grains, helps you to maintain your overall fitness while reducing your risk of heart attack, stroke and other heart conditions.

Equally important to what you're eating is how much you're eating, or portion control. Research suggests, as a general rule of thumb, that it takes your stomach roughly twenty minutes to signal to your brain that you're full. By overloading your plate with portions and eating quickly, you may accidentally overeat before you even know it.

To keep from overeating, try using a smaller plate or bowl. After eating your first round, wait five to ten minutes to ensure you're still hungry before going back for seconds.

Of course, when making substantial changes to your diet, always be sure to talk to your family doctor. They will ensure that you are choosing a diet that is healthy for you.

Getting a Hearty Heart through Better Living

Keep your heart happy and healthy by following these tips.

- **Don't skip meals.** Skipping meals makes you more likely to overeat later during the day.

- **Plan ahead.** Planning your meals for the week can help make sure you are eating from all your food groups.

- **Eat a variety of colors.** This allows you to take in a variety of nutrients, especially when eating fruits and vegetables.

- **Try new flavors.** Herbs and spices keep meals interesting without using salt, which increases blood pressure.

- **Exercise.** Staying active strengthens your heart, improves blood flow, and helps control blood sugar.

- **Quit smoking.** If you smoke, quitting lowers your risk of death from heart disease by 33%.

SOURCES: Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, WebMD

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