

Heart Healthy Eating Quiz - ANSWERS

1. Eating whole eggs causes high blood cholesterol. **False**

While it is true that egg yolks contain a lot of cholesterol, the newest evidence does not show a direct link between the cholesterol found in food and blood cholesterol levels. Trans fat from processed foods is a much bigger culprit in raising blood cholesterol than egg yolks. Instead, whole eggs are quick and inexpensive source of protein. Additionally, the yolks contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which are nutrients linked with reducing your risk of age-related macular degeneration.

2. All raw vegetables are more nutritious than cooked. **False**

Fresh, raw vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet but they are not necessarily more nutritious than cooked, frozen or canned vegetables. The nutrient content of fresh vegetables begins to decline as soon as they are harvested and often they are kept in storage during transit for long periods of time. Frozen vegetables, on the other hand, are frozen just after harvest so most nutrients are preserved. Also, some nutrients are better absorbed by your body when they are eaten in the form of cooked foods. For example, lycopene, a compound found in red foods like tomatoes, appears to be better absorbed when eaten as tomato sauce instead of raw, fresh tomatoes. When buying canned veggies look for those with no-salt-added.

3. Eating peanut butter will clog my arteries because it is very high in fat. **False**

It's true, peanut butter is very high in fat but the type of fat is mostly monounsaturated, which is heart healthy! You do want to buy "natural" peanut butter, which contains only 1 or 2 ingredients: peanuts and maybe a little salt. Avoid any brands that contain partially hydrogenated vegetable oil or added sweeteners in the list of ingredients.

4. Chocolate is rich and delicious and helps lower my blood pressure! **True**

Research continues to show an association between chocolate intake and lower cardiovascular risk, mostly due to reduced blood pressure. It appears to be the cocoa flavanols that provide this benefit so you want to choose the darkest, purest form of chocolate you can find. The first ingredient on a chocolate bar should list some form of chocolate or cocoa (instead of sugar). Also, choose natural cocoa powder, rather than Dutch processed. And be careful about your portion if you are concerned about your weight—one ounce of chocolate contains at least 150 calories!

5. If a label says zero trans fat, then it contains no trans fat. **False**

Well, it may be true but you should be suspicious. Instead of relying on vague statements made by the food producers, find out the truth by going right to the list of ingredients. Avoid anything that lists "partially hydrogenated" vegetable oil or "vegetable shortening" as an ingredient. Labeling about trans fat can be very misleading because if a product contains 0.5 gram of trans fat per serving from partially hydrogenated oil they can say it contains zero!

6. Even if you never salt your food you could still be getting too much sodium in your diet. **True**

There may be a lot of hidden sodium in your diet. For instance, restaurant meals, processed meats (bacon, sausage, ham, etc), canned foods and frozen dinners can easily provide more sodium than you need in an entire day! Make it your goal to cook more (with whole foods) and eat out less!

7. Turkey dogs and sausages are a healthy alternative to beef or pork hot dogs and sausages. **False**

They sound lean and healthy but they are still processed meats. Most turkey or chicken links are loaded with sodium and other preservatives (nitrites seem to be the most troublesome) and many do not even contain less saturated fat. Minimize your intake of all processed meats by thinking of them as condiments instead of a side dish or entrée. For example, crumble one slice of crunchy bacon into an egg scrambled with some spinach. Also, if you are going to eat these meats look for those free of nitrites.

8. Eating mostly fat-free foods is the best way to maintain healthy cholesterol levels. **False**

The old, outdated heart-healthy guidelines told us to avoid all fat and cholesterol. Recent research tells a different story--some fats and oils actually help improve blood cholesterol levels! So instead of avoiding fat it is important to achieve a healthy balance of fats. Omega-3 fatty acids from fish and monounsaturated oils from olive oil, nuts and avocados should make up most of the fat on a heart healthy diet.

9. Margarine is heart healthy because it is cholesterol free. **False**

Almost all margarine is cholesterol free because it is made from vegetable oil. If you are going to eat margarine choose one that does NOT contain "partially hydrogenated" vegetable oil in the list of ingredients. Ideally, you will minimize your intake of butter or margarine and instead choose fats and oils higher in monounsaturated fat. For example, instead of a buttery-spread put peanut or almond butter on your whole grain toast and sauté veggies in a little olive oil.

10. Pretzels are a heart-healthy snack. **False**

This is also a myth from the old, out-dated guidelines that recommended we eat fat-free. Nutritionally, pretzels provide white flour and salt--little else. Let's compare 2 ounces of pretzels (about 10 twists) to a snack of 1/4 cup salted almonds with 1/2 of an apple: the fruit and almond snack provides fewer calories, less than 1/2 the carbs, 5 times the fiber, 4 times the calcium and magnesium, 3 times the potassium and one tenth of the sodium. No comparison!