

# Simple steps to help your heart stay healthy

Americans know what they need to do to keep their hearts healthy. But is their heart really in the effort? A new survey seems to indicate many of us aren't as diligent about making heart healthy choices as we know we should be.

More than 80 percent of those polled by the Florida Department of Citrus in a new survey said they felt well-informed about ways to maintain heart health. Yet fewer than half choose heart healthy options when they eat out or shop for groceries, and only slightly more than a third (37 percent) stock their pantries with heart healthy foods, the survey revealed.

Those who failed to make healthy choices cited time pressures and perceived expenses as the most common reasons why they felt challenged to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"You don't need to overhaul your lifestyle to be heart healthy," says Dr. Richard Collins, The Cooking Cardiologist and director of wellness at South Denver Cardiology Associates. "You can take many easy steps to improve heart health, from substituting ingredients in recipes to choosing the right beverages and making the most of the activities you already enjoy. Many heart healthy steps can be relatively quick and easy to incorporate into your lifestyle, and they don't have to break your budget."

Dr. Collins offers these easy-to-follow heart healthy tips:

- \* Be careful to avoid rebound hunger following your workout. If you maintain a moderate level of daily exercise, you burn roughly anywhere from 13 to 18 calories per pound of body weight a day and should only consume that amount of calories to maintain your current weight.

- \* When reading nutrition labels, look for foods that are rich in vitamin C. Vitamin C can support heart health by helping to neutralize free radicals that can cause cell and tissue damage - damage that may contribute to the development of chronic health issues like heart disease



and cancer. Many fruits and vegetables, such as 100 percent orange juice, are excellent sources of vitamin C.

- \* Not all fats are bad. While you should avoid saturated fats and trans fats, omega-3 fats may help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Omega-3 fats are found in foods such as walnuts, flaxseed and fatty fish, such as salmon or tuna.

Since many of the risk factors for heart disease may be impacted by diet, Collins says supporting heart health may be as simple as learning which foods are heart healthy and how to incorporate them into regular meals.

For example, the orange juice that starts many Americans' mornings provides nutrients such as potassium, which may help maintain healthy blood pressure and promote heart health. Additionally, drinking one serving of citrus juice a day was associated with a 25 percent reduced risk of stroke, according to a study published in "The Journal of the American Medical Association." Orange juice can go beyond the breakfast table. One cup added to your favorite salad dressing, smoothie or marinade is an easy and delicious way to incorporate the beverage's nutrients into your meals.