

## HEALTH REPORT

SPECIAL SECTION: **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

### HEART FOODS

## For healthy heart, look to DASH diet

■ **Consumption of vegetables, Omega-3 rich fish, whole grains and daily exercise helps prevent heart disease.**

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"Everybody's got a hungry heart," Bruce Springsteen once belted in song.

Everyone's heart is hungry, but to maintain heart health women are urged to feed it properly. One suggestion is to follow a program such as the National Institutes of Health's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, a program also endorsed by the American Heart Association and many nutritionists.

DASH, rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium, protein and fiber, calls for eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fatty fish like salmon, tuna and sardines, as well as canola and olive oils, which tend to be high in Omega-3s (the good fats.)

Low-fat milk and yogurt, chicken and walnuts, almonds, pistachios and pecans, all excellent sources of vitamin E, are also touted.

"Garlic, popular here in Miami, one clove per day, reduces the LDL cholesterol," says Isolda Lyon, registered dietician and nutritionist with Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah. LDL cholesterol, or the "bad" cholesterol, can clog and harden the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain and can make them less flexible, a condition known as atherosclerosis. If a clot should form and block one of these compromised arteries, a heart attack or a stroke can result.

The concern is ever greater for women since heart disease is, by far, the leading cause of death for women in the United States — more than cancer, respiratory disease, Alzheimer's and acci-

dents combined. Heart disease claims the lives of half a million women a year in the United States and at least 40 percent of women do not survive their first heart attack, the American Heart Association says. More than 42 million women are living with or at risk for heart disease, according to the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.

"What we are recommending to eat for our heart health is to minimize foods high in saturated fat and reduce the intake of trans fatty acids," Lyon said. "The general plan we follow are the guidelines from the American Heart Association."

Among Lyon's tips:

- Consume at least two servings a week of fatty fish such as trout, salmon, sardines, white cod.

- Eat oxygen-rich foods such as vegetables, whole grains and nuts, which can be high in vitamins E and C and beta-carotene. "Garlic has to be crushed to be effective, same with flaxseeds, and cooked tomatoes are better because lycopenes are released," Lyon said.

- Reduce sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams per day — about one teaspoon of salt. And note that most prepared foods come laden with sodium.

- Eat oatmeal for breakfast, as it can reduce cholesterol.

- Develop a love for avocados, which are high in the good fats. A small slice contains only about five grams of fat.

- Treats like a glass of red wine (about eight ounces) and a bite-sized morsel of dark chocolate are also recommended for their heart-healthy properties.

- "We always recommend an increase in physical activity, at least 30 minutes a day," Lyon said. "The most they can do, the better."