

## Nutrition and Heart Health in Aged Care

by OSCAR Hospitality Dietitian, Caitlin Dillon-Smith

We know that diet influences the development of diseases.

The bad news is that Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Australia. The good news is that with the right nutrition and a healthy lifestyle you can help prevent developing heart disease.

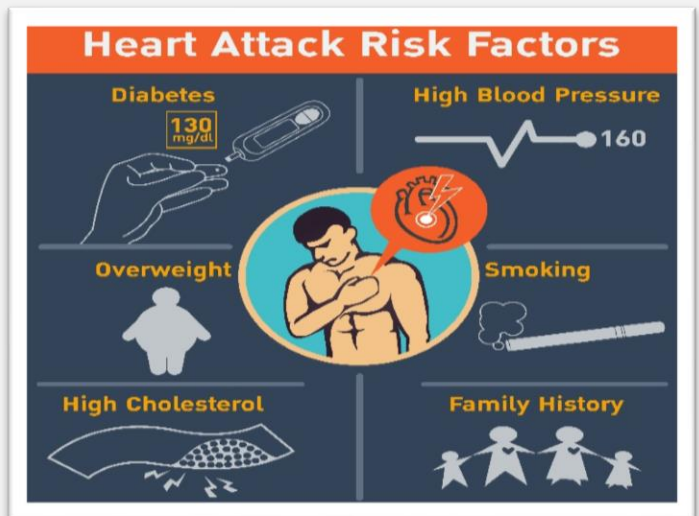
Most CVD is caused by the gradual narrowing or blockage of blood vessels due to the build-up of fatty deposits. For this reason, nutrition can play a key role in helping prevent heart disease.

### Lifestyle- related risk factors for CVD:

- Excess weight (overweight)
- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy diet
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol

### Healthy food, healthy hearts

Healthy eating is central in keeping our bodies healthy and strong. It is important to remember, that healthy eating is a pattern. It's about how you eat over days, weeks, months and even years.



### Tips to help keep hearts healthy:

1. Follow the Australia Dietary Guidelines ([www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au))
2. Select wholegrain rather than white/refined varieties of bread, pasta, noodles, breakfast cereals and rice.
3. Fill your plate with a variety of vegetables and eat fresh fruit daily.
4. Consume healthy protein sources including fish, lean meat and poultry, legumes, nuts and seeds.
5. Choose reduced fat dairy such as unflavoured milk and yoghurt, and cheese.
6. Consume healthy fat choices with nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and their oils for cooking (as safety permits).
7. Use herbs and spices to flavour food, instead of adding salt. A diet high in salt increases your risk of hypertension and heart disease.
8. Eat less 'junk food' such as chips, cakes, lollies and soft drinks.
9. Make water your drink of choice.



Other tips to improve your overall health and reduce your risk of CVD include:

- Exercise for 30 minutes a day
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Avoid smoking
- Achieve & maintain a healthy body weight.

### Is there such a thing as 'Good Fats'?

YES! Healthier fats to include in your diet are called 'Unsaturated Fats' (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated) and actually help reduce your risk of CVD. The unhealthy fats to limit in your diet are called 'Saturated and Trans-Fats.' Too much unhealthy fat can raise your blood cholesterol levels – one of the risk factors for heart disease.



Tips to help you enjoy healthy fats include:

- Cook with healthy fats like olive, canola, peanut or sesame oil
- Replace butter with table spread or avocado
- Eat fish, particularly oily fish like salmon, twice a week
- Snack on nuts, or add them to your salads and stir fries (as safety permits)
- Use nut and seed spreads, like peanut butter or tahini spreads



**For great heart health recipe ideas, please visit:** <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/recipes>

REFERENCES: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs>  
<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resource/cardiovascular-health>  
<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition>  
<https://daa.asn.au/smart-eating-for-you/smart-eating-fast-facts/healthy-eating/whats-the-best-type-of-fat-for-a-healthy-heart/>



**Need to establish a plan to reduce a resident's risk of cardiovascular disease?**  
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 Please call or email our Dietitians via our contact details below.