

5 FOODS YOUR CARDIOLOGIST WANTS YOU TO STOP EATING

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Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US? In 2016, 35% of all deaths in Malaysia were due to heart disease or stroke. We all read about what's healthy and what's not, but sometimes marketing gimmicks, labels and pre-existing notions make us eat food that may actually be harming our bodies. Senior Cardiologist Dr Ramasami Nandakumar highlights the top unhealthy foods for your heart and what to eat instead.



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HEART TO HEART



1 FOODS HIGH IN SALT

You already know foods like chips or crisps pack a lot of salt, but you need to be aware of how much they raise blood pressure, making you susceptible to heart disease. Chips are laden with saturated fat and salt, and both are terrible for your heart. There are also several foods that we almost don't expect to be high in salt. Premade soups, canned vegetables, and off-the-shelf sauces are some of the worst culprits. The solution lies in reading labels and eating fresh – more work in the kitchen, but so worth it! As I always say – be smart. Be label smart.



2 CURED MEAT

If you have been watching *What the Health* on Netflix you already know where this is going! The sausages and cold cuts we eat are laden with nitrates and salt. Nitrates can increase your risk of cancer and salt is a known

contributor to hypertension and heart disease. You can treat yourself with the occasional hot dog or hamburger. When you eat about 50 grams of processed meat every day which is the equivalent of one hot dog or four bacon strips, your risk of developing colorectal cancer increases by 18%. Avoid red meat and processed meat and include skinless poultry (chicken or duck), lean meat, oily fish (salmon, sardines or tuna), beans and lentils for your fill of protein.



3 SUGAR AND ITS HIDDEN FORMS

While we often strive to not eat sugar in the form of chocolates and candy, there's plenty of it in that soda you are sipping too. Whilst there are many obvious foods like pastries, white rice and sweet sauces, breakfast cereals and fruit juices also pack a lot of sugar. We all like our can of soda or soft drink with our food, but that could have approximately 10 or 11 teaspoons of sugar which exceeds the American Heart Association recommendations for consumption of sugar (6 teaspoons for women and 9 for men). Try to include whole grains and fibre in your diet and be aware of foods that have high glycaemic index. You've probably heard it before, but be conscious of portion sizes, read labels and snack on fruit or nuts when that urge to eat sugar strikes. And yes, think again before you open that can of soda.



4 FRIED FOOD

Love that bucket of fried chicken? Your heart is urging you to stop eating it along with those samosas, fries and pub-style calamari. The carbs can spike your sugar levels and the added fat and salt is doing your heart no favours. Do consider healthy snacks such as nuts or seeds but if you really crave those crisps then baked is reasonable. Moderate consumption and preparation methods are key to maintaining a balanced nutritious diet.



5 BLENDED COFFEE

Saying goodbye to our regular cup at the coffee shop sounds too harsh, cruel even. Most of my patients hate having to do away with their regular coffee. But even if you skip the cream, the syrup, sugar and other toppings can increase your blood sugar and blood pressure levels and that is a total disaster for your heart health. My advise is to not skip your cuppa entirely, just have it black or with milk and stay away from the added sugar. I actually prefer gourmet, well-sourced coffee ie, Ethiopian, Sumatra or the Kenyan – with no add ons! **HT**

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