

American Heart Month Vocabulary

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Children and adults can both benefit from learning, understanding and using heart healthy vocabulary words when talking about food.

Antioxidant (noun) A substance that protects body cells against damage from free radicals, which play a role in heart disease, cancer, and other diseases. The body makes some antioxidants while others are found in food including certain vitamins, minerals and plant compounds.

Cholesterol (noun) A waxy, fat-like substance found in all the cells of your body. It is used to make hormones, vitamin D, and other important substances. Your body makes all of the cholesterol it needs. There are two main types: HDL (good) and LDL (bad). LDL is bad because it can build up plaque on the walls of arteries. HDL is good because it helps to remove LDL.

Energy Balance (noun) The relationship between energy “in” - food calories taken into the body through food and drink, and energy “out” - calories being used by the body for daily energy needs.

Fiber (noun) A part of plant-based foods that cannot be digested and passes through the digestive system helping to clear out harmful substances such as cholesterol.

Free Radical (noun) An unstable molecule produced in the body after exposure to harmful agents such as (but not limited to) smoke, radiation, air pollution, deep fried foods, and contaminated water.

Heart Healthy (adjective) Food and activity that contribute to a healthy heart and circulatory system.

Lean Protein (noun) A protein source that is low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. As defined by the USDA, it contains less than 10 grams of total fat, no more than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 mg of cholesterol in a 3.5 ounce serving.

Mineral (noun) A chemical element that the body needs to perform functions necessary for development, growth, and life. We get minerals from the foods we eat.



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More heart healthy vocabulary words...

Omega-3 Fatty Acids (noun) A family of fatty acids that must be taken in through food, provide multiple health benefits, and play important roles in body functions. Omega-3s are typically found in plant-based unsaturated fats as well as fatty fish.

Processed Food (noun) Any food that has been mechanically or chemically changed to preserve, package, or otherwise prepare. Foods range from minimally processed to ultra processed. In general, foods become less nutritious as they move in the direction of ultra processed.

Saturated Fat (noun) Fats that are usually solid at room temperature and can raise LDL (bad) cholesterol, and may contribute to heart disease. It's recommended that saturated fat be eaten in moderation.

Trans Fat (noun) Fats that are mainly found in ultra processed foods and have been shown to raise LDL (bad) cholesterol and lower HDL (good) cholesterol. Eating trans fats increases the risk of heart disease.

Unsaturated Fat (noun) Fats that are usually liquid at room temperature and come from plant-based foods such as olives and sunflowers. Unsaturated fats are considered healthier than saturated fats as they do not raise LDL (bad) cholesterol and also provide some health benefits.

Vitamin (noun) A natural compound essential in small amounts for normal growth and healthy body functions. We need to get most vitamins from food because the body either does not produce them or produces very little.

Whole Food (noun) A food that has little to no processing and is free from added chemical preservatives or other artificial substances.

Whole Grains (noun) A grain (like wheat, oats, corn and rice) that is eaten with all of its essential parts (bran, germ, endosperm). When compared to highly-processed grains, whole grains are better sources of fiber and other important nutrients.

