

## **ASSESSMENT OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOODS FOR CHILDREN, ADULT AND ELDERLY: A SCIENTIFIC WAY OF MITIGATING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A diet high in fruits and vegetables decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease and death for children and adults. High dietary intakes of saturated fat, trans-fats, and salt and low intakes of fruits, vegetables, and fish are linked to cardiovascular risk. The study assessed the best heart-friendly foods for children, adults, and the elderly as a scientific way of mitigating cardiovascular diseases. The study revealed that dietary risk factors are associated with 53% of cardiovascular disease deaths. The study concluded that heart-friendly foods for individuals across different age groups represent a crucial step in combating cardiovascular diseases. For children, a focus on nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins lays the foundation for a heart-healthy diet. Adults benefit from a balanced diet that includes omega-3 fatty acids from sources like fatty fish, nuts, and seeds, as well as the incorporation of foods that lower cholesterol levels, such as oats and legumes. For the elderly, the assessment emphasizes the importance of managing portion sizes, reducing sodium intake, and maintaining a diet rich in antioxidants from fruits and vegetables. One of the recommendations made was that people should reduce the intake of refined sources of carbohydrates with higher glycaemic indices (including foods with added sugars).*

**KEYWORDS: Best Heart Friendly Foods, Children, Adult, Elderly and Cardiovascular Diseases**

## INTRODUCTION

Any condition affecting the heart or blood vessels is known as a cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVDs constitute a class of diseases that includes coronary artery diseases (e.g., angina, heart attack), stroke, heart failure, hypertensive heart disease, rheumatic heart disease, cardiomyopathy, abnormal heart rhythms, congenital heart disease, valvular heart disease, carditis, aortic aneurysms, peripheral artery disease, thromboembolic disease, and venous thrombosis. The underlying mechanisms vary depending on the disease. It is estimated that dietary risk factors are associated with 53% of CVD deaths (Petersen, Kristina Kris-Etherton, & Penny 2021). Coronary artery disease, stroke, and peripheral artery disease involve atherosclerosis. This may be caused by high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes mellitus, a lack of exercise, obesity, high blood cholesterol, a poor diet, excessive alcohol consumption, and poor sleep, among other things. High blood pressure is estimated to account for approximately 13% of CVD deaths, while tobacco accounts for 9%, diabetes 6%, lack of exercise 6%, and obesity 5%. Rheumatic heart disease may follow untreated strep throat. It is estimated that up to 90% of CVD may be preventable (O'Donnell, Chin, Rangarajan, Xavier, Liu, and Zhang 2016). Prevention of CVD involves improving risk factors through healthy eating, exercise, the avoidance of tobacco smoke, and limiting alcohol intake. Treating risk factors such as high blood pressure, high blood lipids, and diabetes is also beneficial. A diet high in fruits and vegetables decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease and death for children and the elderly (Wang et al. 2014). High dietary intakes of saturated fat, trans-fats, and salt and low intakes of fruits, vegetables, and fish are linked to cardiovascular risk, although whether all these associations indicate causes is disputed. The World Health Organization attributes approximately 1.7 million deaths worldwide to low fruit and vegetable consumption. Frequent consumption of high-energy foods, such as processed foods that are high in fats and sugars, promotes obesity and may increase cardiovascular risk. The amount of dietary salt consumed may also be an important determinant of blood pressure levels and overall cardiovascular risk. There is moderate-quality evidence that reducing saturated fat intake for at least two years reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. High trans-fat intake has adverse effects on blood lipids and circulating inflammatory markers, and the elimination of trans-fat from diets has been widely advocated. In 2018, the World Health Organization estimated that trans fats were the cause of more than half a million deaths per year. There is evidence that higher consumption of sugar is associated with higher blood pressure and unfavorable blood lipids, and sugar intake also increases the risk of diabetes mellitus. High consumption of processed meats is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, possibly in part due to increased dietary salt intake (Micha, Michas, and Mozaffarian 2012).

## CONCEPT OF FOOD

According to the Collins English Dictionary, food is any substance consumed by an organism for nutritional support. Food is usually of plant, animal, or fungal origin and contains essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals. Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support and energy to an organism. Food is mainly composed of water, lipids, proteins, and carbohydrates. Minerals (e.g., salts) and organic substances (e.g., vitamins) can also be found in food. Human food can be classified in various ways, either by related content or by how it is processed. The number and composition of food groups can vary. Most systems include four basic groups that describe their origin and relative nutritional function: vegetables and fruit, cereals and bread, dairy, and meat. Studies that look into diet quality group foods into whole grains and cereals, refined grains and cereals, vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, eggs, dairy products, fish, red meat, processed meat, and sugar-sweetened beverages.

## TYPE OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR CHILDREN

- Eggs:

One large egg has 6 grams of protein and delivers vitamin D, vitamin B12 and iron, per the USDA. Some eggs are also fortified with omega-3 fatty acids, which aid in kids' brain development. Don't worry about the cholesterol—saturated and Tran's fats have a bigger impact on raising bad cholesterol than eggs. At breakfast, skip the pastries, fried foods and processed meats and scramble some eggs for your kids instead. If your kids aren't fans of scrambled, try different presentations like egg salad or egg casseroles. Eggs also make a great starter food for babies. Doctors used to recommend not giving eggs until babies were 12 months old. However, as of 2020, the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology states that allergenic foods like eggs can be introduced when babies are ready for solid foods, and in fact, might help prevent food allergies.

- Beans:

Beans are a very nutritious food. They're loaded with protein and fiber, plus they're cheap and take little time to prepare. Buy low-sodium canned beans such as black beans, chickpeas or kidney beans. Simply open the can, rinse them to remove extra sodium and add to any dish. "Replacing ground beef with beans in a quesadilla or tossing beans with pasta helps maintain high-quality, lean protein while adding a key nutrient: fiber," says Andrews. There are pastas made from beans too. "Kids ages 4 to 8 need around 25 grams of fiber a day and most products marketed directly to kids, like fruit snacks and cheese crackers, contain little if any. Fiber helps promote healthy digestion and helps your kids feel fuller, longer, so they aren't asking you for a snack 5 minutes after dinner ends," says Andrews

- Vegetables:

Kids and adults alike don't eat enough veggies. If you can get your child to eat any vegetable—kudos! And the more color and the greater the variety of vegetables, the better. Each color delivers different nutrients: Leafy greens like spinach and kale are high in vitamin K, orange and red vegetables have vitamin A, peppers are

packed with vitamin C, and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower contain cancer-fighting compounds and feed good gut bacteria. Really it is about taking the 'fear' away from veggies. While a slice of pizza is very approachable, a stalk of broccoli can seem intimidating," says Andrews. "So, make veggies easy and accessible. Wash and cut celery, carrot and cucumber sticks and keep them in the fridge for snacking. If you have some green space available, plant a small garden with cherry tomatoes and sweet baby peppers; when kids grow their own food, they are proud of the results, and therefore more willing to indulge in the bounty. "Andrews also recommends introducing new vegetables along with ones that your child is already familiar with. Make-your-own taco bars or pizza night at home are great ways to encourage young chefs!" says Andrews. Don't give up after offering a vegetable a few times. It takes repeated exposure. Switching up how you serve the vegetables can help too. Some kids won't eat raw tomatoes but will eat cooked diced tomatoes in a pasta sauce.

## TYPES OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR ADULT

### Choose Healthy Sources of Protein

Walnuts and almonds are known for their omega 3 fatty acids. A quarter cup of nuts makes a great snack. Eating more nuts was associated with lower risk of heart disease, coronary heart disease, and stroke. Lentils are high in fiber, high in protein, easy to cook, and may cause less gastrointestinal (GI) discomfort than beans. A higher intake of legumes (beans and peas) is linked to lower heart disease risk

- **Fish and seafood:** My favorites are salmon or seared halibut because they are high in protein, have fewer calories and contain healthy heart Omega 3 fatty acids.
- **Low-fat or fat-free dairy products:** My favorite is non-fat Greek yogurt because of its versatility. It's high in protein, has a lot of calcium, and can replace sour cream in many recipes. It's a great breakfast option, stirred with quick oats and berries.
- **Lean cuts of meat and poultry:** There is a direct association between eating red meat and the risk of heart disease and death. That relationship is even stronger for processed meat such as bacon or hot dogs. Instead of processed meats, I often choose skinless chicken thighs. It's leaner than most beef, affordable and has more flavor than chicken breast, which I get tired of.
- **Herbs and Spices:** The use of herbs and spices to flavor foods instead of salt is good because eating too much salt can lead to high blood pressure, which is a risk factor for recommended amount of salt they eat is found in processed and packaged food such as canned foods, deli meats (like ham and Salami) and baked foods. One of the best ways to reduce the number of salts we eat is to base your diet on fresh, unprocessed foods like fruits and vegetables if you want to add extra flavor to your food, try adding herbs and spices.
- **Tomatoes:** Tomatoes have lots of nutrients that might help keep our hearts healthy. The little red fruits are chock-full of fiber, potassium, vitamin C,

foliate, and choline, which are all good for the heart. As well as helping to keep heart disease at bay, potassium benefits muscles and bones, and helps prevent kidney stones from forming. Scientists have argued that increasing potassium intake while decreasing sodium intake is the most important dietary change when attempting to reduce the risk of heart disease.

## **BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR ELDERLY**

- **Water:**

As you go up in years, not only does your body lose water, but your sense of thirst starts to fade. That means it will take you longer to know when you're low on fluids. Water is good for your health in lots of ways. It cushions your joints, helps control your body temperature, and affects your mood and how well you focus. Make eight glasses of water each day your goal.

- **Fiber:**

Foods that are high in fiber -- like fruits and veggies, oatmeal, nuts, and legumes -- can help with constipation that becomes more common as you age. They're also able to help lower your cholesterol levels, manage your blood sugar, and keep you at a healthy weight. If you're a man who's 51 or older, aim to eat 30 grams of fiber each day. If you're a woman, try for about 21 grams.

- **Cruciferous Vegetables:**

The more candles on your birthday cake, the weaker your immune system -- your body's defense against germs. Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower could help shore it up. They have a chemical called sulforaphane that switches on your immune cells so they're better able to attack toxins that damage your cells and cause disease over time. Eat them often, and you may lower your risk of some types of cancer.

## **RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION RATE OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR CHILDREN**

It's important to provide children with a balanced and heart-healthy diet to promote their overall health and reduce the risk of heart disease later in life. While I can provide general recommendations for heart-friendly foods for children, it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional or a registered dietitian for personalized guidance based on a child's age, activity level, and specific dietary needs. Here are some heart-healthy foods that are generally recommended for children, along with references to reputable sources:

- **Fruits and Vegetables:**

Aim for at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. These foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber, which support heart health. Encourage a variety of colorful options, (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Whole Grains:**

Choose whole grains like whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oats over refined grains. These provide more fiber and nutrients that support heart health, (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

- **Fish:**

Include fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and trout, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Aim for at least two servings of fish per week, (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Lean Proteins:**

Choose lean sources of protein such as poultry, lean cuts of beef or pork, beans, and legumes. Limit processed meats and red meat.

- **Dairy or Dairy Alternatives:**

Opt for low-fat or non-fat dairy products or dairy alternatives like fortified almond or soy milk. These provide calcium and other nutrients for heart health.

- **Nuts and Seeds:**

Include small portions of unsalted nuts and seeds as snacks. They are a source of healthy fats, fiber, and protein, (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

- **Water:**

Encourage drinking plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated and support overall health, including heart health. Remember that portion sizes and dietary recommendations may vary based on a child's age and individual health needs. It's crucial to consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to create a specific and appropriate diet plan for a child's heart health, (American Academy of Pediatrics. 2019).

## **RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION RATE OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR ADULT**

Maintaining a heart-healthy diet is crucial for adults to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, which remain a leading cause of death worldwide. To promote heart health, adults should prioritize a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, aiming for at least 5 servings per day, as they provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that support cardiovascular health (American Heart Association, 2021). Whole grains, such as whole wheat, brown rice, and oats, should constitute a significant portion of daily grain intake, as they offer higher fiber content and essential nutrients beneficial for heart health (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

Incorporating fatty fish like salmon and mackerel into the diet is essential due to their high omega-3 fatty acid content, which can help lower the risk of heart disease (American Heart Association, 2021). Lean protein sources, including poultry, beans, lentils, and tofu, should be preferred to reduce saturated fat intake. Incorporating

unsalted nuts and seeds as snacks or meal additions provides healthy fats, fiber, and protein, all of which contribute to better heart health (American Heart Association, 2021). A focus on healthy fats, like those found in olive oil, avocados, and nuts, should replace saturated and Trans fats in the diet, as these healthier fats can improve cholesterol levels (Mayo Clinic, 2021). Limiting sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams per day, or ideally, 1,500 milligrams, is vital to manage blood pressure, a significant risk factor for heart disease (American Heart Association, 2021). While consuming alcohol, moderation is key, with guidelines recommending up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men (American Heart Association, 2021) Staying well-hydrated with water and herbal teas while avoiding sugary beverages further supports heart health (American Heart Association, 2021).

Promoting heart health through diet is a vital component of overall well-being for adults. A heart-healthy diet can help reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, which are a leading cause of mortality worldwide. Here, we provide comprehensive recommendations for the consumption of the best heart-friendly foods for adults, supported by reputable sources.

- **Fruits and Vegetables:**

A cornerstone of heart-healthy eating is a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, aiming for a minimum of 5 servings per day. These foods provide a plethora of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and dietary fiber that support cardiovascular health (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Whole Grains:**

Incorporating whole grains such as whole wheat, brown rice, quinoa, and oats into your daily diet is essential. Strive to have at least half of your grain consumption come from whole grains to benefit from their higher fiber content and heart-protective nutrients (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

- **Fatty Fish:**

Include fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, trout, and sardines regularly in your diet. These fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, known for their ability to reduce the risk of heart disease (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Lean Proteins:**

Opt for lean sources of protein, such as poultry, lean cuts of beef or pork, beans, lentils, and tofu. This choice helps minimize saturated fat intake, a significant contributor to heart disease (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2022).

- **Nuts and Seeds:**

A small daily portion of unsalted nuts and seeds makes for an excellent heart-healthy snack. They are packed with healthy fats, fiber, and protein, all of which contribute positively to heart health (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Healthy Fats:**

Replace saturated and Trans fats with healthier fats like those found in olive oil, avocados, and nuts. These fats can help improve cholesterol profiles and reduce the risk of heart disease (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

- **Limit Sodium:**

Keeping sodium intake in check is crucial for maintaining heart health. Aim to consume less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day, or ideally, 1,500 milligrams, if possible, to manage blood pressure effectively (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Moderate Alcohol:**

If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation. For most adults, this means up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men (American Heart Association, 2021).

- **Stay Hydrated:**

Maintain adequate hydration throughout the day by drinking plenty of water and herbal teas. Limiting sugary beverages can help reduce the risk of obesity and heart disease (American Heart Association, 2021).

Incorporating these recommendations into your daily dietary choices, along with maintaining a healthy lifestyle, can significantly improve heart health and reduce the risk of heart-related illnesses. However, it's crucial to remember that individual dietary needs can vary, and consulting with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian for personalized guidance is advisable, especially if you have specific health conditions or dietary preferences. These guidelines, supported by authoritative sources, provide a comprehensive approach to a heart-healthy diet for adults.

## **RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION RATE OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD FOR ELDERLY**

A heart-healthy diet is essential for seniors as they are more susceptible to cardiovascular diseases. Incorporating the right foods in their diet can significantly reduce the risk of heart-related issues and improve overall well-being. The recommended consumption rate of the best heart-friendly foods for elders includes a combination of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Fruits and vegetables rich in antioxidants, fiber, and potassium are key components of a heart-healthy diet. Seniors should aim to consume at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Berries, citrus fruits, leafy greens, and colorful vegetables are particularly beneficial for heart health (Estruch et al., 2013).

Whole grains like oats, brown rice, and quinoa should make up a substantial portion of an elder's diet. These grains are high in fiber, which helps in reducing cholesterol levels and maintaining healthy blood pressure. Elderly individuals should aim for 3 to 6 servings of whole grains per day (McRae et al., 2017). Incorporating lean proteins like poultry, fish, beans, and legumes is essential for heart health. Seniors should consume at least 2 servings of fatty fish (such as salmon or

mackerel) per week to benefit from omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce the risk of heart disease (Mozaffarian et al., 2016). Healthy fats like those found in avocados, nuts, and olive oil should be included in an elder's diet. These fats can help lower bad cholesterol levels and improve overall heart health. Aim for 2 to 4 servings of healthy fats per day (Sacks et al., 2017). It is crucial for seniors to limit their intake of sodium, sugary foods, and saturated fats to maintain heart health. Drinking plenty of water and staying hydrated is also essential.

Heart-friendly foods for older adults can help maintain cardiovascular health and reduce the risk of heart disease. Here are some heart-healthy foods supported by research:

- **Fatty Fish:**

Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and trout are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering triglycerides, reducing inflammation, and improving blood vessel function. The American Heart Association recommends at least two servings of fatty fish per week (American Heart Association 2018).

- **Oats:**

Oats are high in soluble fiber, which can help lower LDL cholesterol levels. A study published in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine suggests that consuming oats can lead to improvements in heart health (Oats and Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors 2019).

- **Berries:**

Berries, such as blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries, are packed with antioxidants and fiber. These compounds can help reduce blood pressure and inflammation, which are risk factors for heart disease (Basu & Rhone2016).

- **Nuts:**

, like almonds, walnuts, and pistachios, are rich in unsaturated fats, fiber, and antioxidants. They can help lower LDL cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease (Kris-Etherton et al. 2008).

- **Leafy Greens:**

Dark leafy greens like spinach and kale are excellent sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They can help reduce blood pressure and improve overall heart health (Blekkenhorst et al. 2018).

- **Legumes:**

Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are high in fiber, protein, and potassium, which can contribute to lower blood pressure and improved heart health.

- **Olive Oil:**

Extra virgin olive oil contains monounsaturated fats and antioxidants that can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Research published in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that a Mediterranean diet with olive oil can lower the risk of major cardiovascular events (Estruch et al. 2013).

- **Avocado:**

Avocados are a source of healthy fats, fiber, and potassium. They can help lower LDL cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease (Wien et al. 2013).

- **Tomatoes:**

Tomatoes are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that may help reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering LDL cholesterol and reducing inflammation (Ried & Fakler 2011).

- **Garlic:**

Garlic has been associated with improved heart health due to its potential to lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol levels (Ried et al. 2013).

It's essential to maintain a balanced diet that includes a variety of these heart-healthy foods while also paying attention to portion sizes and overall calorie intake. Consulting with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian can provide personalized guidance for older adults to promote heart health. Please consider that while these foods are generally considered heart-healthy, individual dietary needs and restrictions may vary. It's always a good idea to consult with a healthcare provider or nutritionist for personalized recommendation based on an individual's specific health conditions and preferences. To promote heart health in seniors, it's important to emphasize portion control and mindful eating. Smaller, balanced meals throughout the day can help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of overeating, which can lead to obesity and heart problems.

Elders should also consider incorporating foods that are rich in antioxidants and vitamins. These include nuts, seeds, and dark chocolate in moderation. These foods can help combat oxidative stress and inflammation in the body, contributing to overall heart health. Seniors should be mindful of their fluid intake. Staying adequately hydrated is essential for cardiovascular health. While water is the primary source of hydration, herbal teas, and low-sugar fruit juices can also be included in the diet. Aim for at least 8-10 cups of fluids daily, unless otherwise advised by a healthcare professional. It's crucial for seniors to maintain a healthy body weight. Obesity is a significant risk factor for heart disease. Along with a heart-healthy diet, regular physical activity is essential for weight management and overall cardiovascular fitness. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, as recommended by the American Heart Association (Eckel et al., 2014). The recommended consumption rate of the best heart-friendly foods for elders involves a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats, while limiting sodium, sugary foods, and saturated fats.

Alongside dietary choices, portion control, hydration, and regular physical activity are critical components of maintaining heart health in seniors.

## **EFFECTS OF BEST HEART FRIENDLY FOOD ON MITIGATION OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IN CHILDREN**

Promoting a heart-healthy diet in children can have significant positive effects on mitigating the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) as they grow into adults. While research specific to children is somewhat limited, the following information is based on general principles of nutrition and their impact on cardiovascular health in both children and adults:

- **Fruits and Vegetables:**

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables provides essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and dietary fiber. These components help reduce blood pressure, lower inflammation, and improve overall heart health. Encouraging children to consume a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables can contribute to a reduced risk of CVD later in life (Wang et al 2014).

- **Whole Grains:**

Whole grains like whole wheat, oats, and brown rice are high in fiber, which helps lower cholesterol levels and maintain healthy blood vessels. A diet rich in whole grains is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease, and establishing this habit during childhood can lead to lifelong cardiovascular benefits (Mellen et al 2008).

- **Fatty Fish:**

Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s have anti-inflammatory properties, improve blood vessel function, and may lower the risk of CVD. Introducing fish into children's diets can support their long-term cardiovascular health (Mozaffarian & Rimm 2006).

- **Nuts and Seeds:**

Nuts like almonds, walnuts, and seeds like flaxseeds and chia seeds provide healthy fats, fiber, and antioxidants. These nutrients are associated with lower LDL cholesterol levels and reduced inflammation, contributing to a lower risk of heart disease (Kris-Etherton 2008).

- **Low-Fat Dairy:**

Low-fat or fat-free dairy products like yogurt and milk are good sources of calcium and vitamin D, important for bone health and overall well-being. A balanced intake of these dairy products can be part of a heart-healthy diet for children (Micha et al 2017).

- **Limiting Added Sugars:**

Reducing the consumption of added sugars, especially from sugary beverages and processed food, can help prevent obesity and reduce the risk of CVD. Encouraging children to make healthier beverage and snack choices is crucial for long-term heart health (Malik et al 2010).

- **Healthy Cooking Methods:**

Teaching children and parents about heart-healthy cooking methods, such as grilling, baking, steaming, and sautéing with healthy oils like olive oil, can promote a lower intake of saturated and Trans fats, which are associated with CVD.

- **Hydration:**

Encouraging children to stay hydrated with water and limiting sugary drinks can help maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of CVD associated with excess sugar consumption<sup>8</sup>. While there may not be specific studies focusing solely on the effects of these foods on cardiovascular disease in children, the principles of a heart-healthy diet for children are based on established nutritional guidelines and research indicating the long-term benefits of these dietary choices on cardiovascular health in both children and adults.

## CONCLUSION

Heart-friendly foods for individuals across different age groups, represents a crucial step in combating cardiovascular diseases. For children, a focus on nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins lays the foundation for a heart-healthy diet. Adults benefit from a balanced diet that includes omega-3 fatty acids from sources like fatty fish, nuts, and seeds, as well as the incorporation of foods that lower cholesterol levels, such as oats and legumes. For the elderly, the assessment emphasizes the importance of managing portion sizes, reducing sodium intake, and maintaining a diet rich in antioxidants from fruits and vegetables.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- People should reduce the intake of refined sources of carbohydrates with higher glycaemic indices (including foods with added sugars).
- Avoid packaged and processed foods, limit fast foods and salty foods. Replace salt at the table and in cooking, with herbs and spices for flavour.
- People of all ages should eat more of vegetables, fruits and wholegrain cereals.

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