

Join us for the



Nutrition Talk on
Friday, February 23
from 4 to 5 PM!

February is National Heart Month.
Our next nutrition session will focus on
how and why eating a variety of
heart-healthy nutrients can keep our
hearts healthy and strong.



The Keys to a Healthy Heart

By Stephanie Mull, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

February is National Heart Month and the theme at Fitwize is “Spreading the Love; Feeding the Hungry.” This month during our nutrition session, we are going to focus on loving ourselves by caring for our hearts. There are many factors that influence our heart health. These include diet and exercise but also stress, weight and whether we smoke or not. The keys to heart health is including fiber and nutrient rich foods in our daily diet and strengthening our heart as a muscle. Below are some of the important points we will focus on.

- Get moving! Exercise works our heart as a muscle and the more we use it, the stronger it will get. Kids should strive for 60 minutes of active play each day.
- Include fiber in your diet. Kids older than 4 years old and all adults should ingest a minimum of 25 grams of fiber daily. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Read your labels to ensure you are getting adequate fiber in your food choices. There is no specific guideline for each food item. Rather, I suggest you pay attention to how your fiber adds up throughout the day. Cereals, breads, oatmeal, rice, quinoa and beans are all sources that can provide a significant amount of fiber in a serving.
- We need fat in our diet. Fat plays an important role in absorbing some vitamins, producing important hormones and transporting substances throughout the body. Some fats are healthier than others. Unsaturated fats, ones found in olive or canola oil, nuts, peanut butter, avocado and fish, are considered the healthiest for our heart. Saturated fats are more solid at room temperature and can be found in animal foods like meat and whole fat milk and cheese. Saturated fats can also be man-made into hydrogenated and trans-fats. They are even less healthy for the heart because they are more stable and more difficult to break down. From a dietary perspective, including unsaturated fats and reducing saturated fats will be the most protective for our heart. However, it is extremely important to remember that fat is calorically dense and more fat is not good for our heart. The key is to keep our fat intake low and include heart-healthy fats as the primary source. Be mindful of your fat choices throughout the day as they do add up fast!
- Eat as many fruits and vegetables as you can! Besides their fiber content, these food groups contain a lot of color, which means they are loaded with protective vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, all of which can repair damage to our cells and tissues.

For more information on heart health for you and your family, check out the “getting healthy” section at the American Heart Association’s website. The link is below.

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/GettingHealthy_UCM_001078_SubHomePage.jsp