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USE CART TO SHOP SMART FOR YOUR HEART

February is heart month, which is a prime time to check in with your master ticker. Your heart is about the size of your fist and is the best muscle you'll ever have. Unfortunately cardiovascular disease is still the #1 cause of death in America. Cardio means heart and vascular means vessels so cardiovascular disease is really a disease of the vessels of the heart. This delicate tubing can get "nicks" it in from an unhealthy diet, smoking, stress, high blood pressure, and high blood glucose. To keep your vessels smooth and clear, incorporate the following suggestions starting at the grocery store.

Keeping your heart healthy isn't only about excluding foods from your diet, it is about including the right nutrients that help nourish and protect your heart.

Aisle-by-Aisle

Each aisle is your opportunity to eat smart for your heart. Take an aisle-by-aisle look at heart-smart shopping.

Know Your MEATS

For heart health, choose meats that are graded "select" or "choice" and choose meat cuts with the words "loin" or "round" because they contain less fat. Pick up wild Alaskan salmon or salmon canned in water for a big dose of **omega-3 fatty acids**. If you don't like fish or are a vegetarian, look for eggs with Omega-3 fatty acids. The eggs have Omega-3 fatty acids because the chickens were fed omega-3 containing foods. You can also pick up already-marinated tofu or meat alternatives to gain the heart-healthy isoflavones from **soy**. *Morning Star* makes tasty soy sausage patties and many varieties of garden burgers.

Don't Forget DAIRY

Grab skim, or 1% milk to cut down on saturated fat content. Do your heart a favor and fill the cart with reduced-fat cheese like reduced-fat Havarti, Provolone, *Laughing Cow*, *Baby Bell Light*, *Queso Fresco*, light string cheese, cottage cheese, and low-fat yogurt. Dairy contains calcium and magnesium, which have been linked to lowering blood pressure. You can also try chocolate **soymilk**, which can fill in as an afternoon snack when the chocolate thoughts creep up.

Super-Size on PRODUCE

Produce can help become your own natural medication. It's a good source of **soluble fiber** and folic acid, which may help lower cholesterol. It also contains the minerals potassium and magnesium, which are linked to lowering blood pressure. Since produce is very perishable, stock up every time you make a trip to the store. Choose three different colors of fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. Choose low-sodium canned and frozen vegetables without sauces. Stick to ½ cup calcium-fortified orange juice.

Go For GRAINS

Grain products are a source of **soluble fiber** and the B vitamin, **folic acid**, which are linked to heart health. Look for whole grain cereals with 5 grams of fiber or more and 1-2 grams or more of soluble fiber – some labels break down the fiber into soluble and insoluble, others don't, so find one that does. Look on the label too for cereals fortified with folic acid. Pasta and rice can also be found fortified with folic acid. Stick to only products with a whole-grain listed as the first ingredient