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## **EATSMART By Jean Carper Ten Best Nutritional Points**

Every meal can easily include several points on this no-nonsense list.

Details about specific nutrients are fascinating. But in tracking down the fine points, don't lose sight of the big picture. Here are 10 solid, sweeping actions that will get you the best nutrition bank in 2004.

- Eat seven to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day.** Antioxidant-packed, they can cut your risk of heart disease up to 70%, diabetes 40%, lung cancer 30% and breast cancer 20%, studies show. Tops in antioxidants: prunes, raisins, blueberries, blackberries, garlic, kale, cranberries, raspberries, strawberries, spinach.
- Eat fatty fish two or three times a week.** That provides enough omega-3 fat to help prevent heart disease, arthritis and brain dysfunction. Fish oil protects brain cells, and suppresses inflammation and irregular heartbeats. In a new study, eating fish just once a week cut the risk of Alzheimer's disease 60%. Best: salmon, sardines (fresh and canned), mackerel, herring.
- Restrict red meat to once or twice a week.** Recent evidence ties red meat (beef, pork, veal, lamb) to increased cancer of the colon, pancreas, breast, prostate and kidney. Reason: Carcinogens form in meat during cooking. Worst methods: frying, barbecuing. Best: baking, stewing, boiling, microwaving.
- Eat 25 grams of fiber a day.** Most adults eat less than half that. Fiber lowers cholesterol and blood pressure; cuts the risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer; and helps control weight. Super sources: All-Bran, Fiber One, oat-bran cereals (check labels), dried beans, barley.
- Use olive oil primarily; avoid trans fats.** Olive oil is the main choice of people who live the longest and have the least heart disease, cancer and other chronic diseases. Deadliest: trans fats in some margarines and baked goods, such as doughnuts – they clog arteries more than saturated animal fats do.
- Eat "good" carbs.** Slash "whites" – bread, sugar, potatoes – that cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. Such foods can double your odds of heart attack, diabetes and certain cancers, and make you fat. Eat carbs that produce a slow rise in blood sugar. Best: legumes (including peanuts); whole-grain, high-fiber breads and cereals; fruits and vegetables.

☐ **Drink three or more cups of tea a day.** “Real” tea (not herbal) helps save you from heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, infection, age-related mental decline, dental cavities and weight gain. In one study, three cups a day cut the risk of heart attack 11%. Brewed caffeinated green tea has the most antioxidants; bottled and instant teas have the least.

☐ **Eat nuts every day.** A mere 3/4 ounce of nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans, peanuts) daily slashed the risk of heart disease and diabetes 30% and Parkinson’s disease 43% in Harvard studies. Daily consumption of nuts and peanuts, including peanut butter, helped control weight in other research.

☐ **Shave portions by one-third to half.** Gigantic portions are a major cause of weight gain and obesity. In studies, adults given a large serving ate 30% more calories than when given a small one. Kids, too, devoured 25% more calories when served oversized portions. If it isn’t on the plate, you aren’t tempted.

☐ **Take a daily multivitamin/mineral pill.** It can erase subtle deficiencies that make you more prone to infections and chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, cancer and bone fractures. Many leading authorities now urge all adults to take a daily supplement.

*Contributing Editor Jean Carper is a nutrition authority. Contact her or sign up for a free e-mail newsletter at [JeanCarper.com](http://JeanCarper.com).*