

# THE HEALTHY CPA

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February 2022

## Your Heart: Sleep on It

**Are you getting enough sleep?** A third of adults don't meet the minimum seven hours of bedtime sleep daily to maintain good overall health, and good cardiovascular health in particular. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to a higher risk for several heart-related conditions — high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart attack, obesity, diabetes and stroke.

**Ongoing deficit sleep or interrupted sleep** may reduce the time you spend in the deep stages of sleep that benefit your heart and help prevent serious cardiovascular problems.

**Sleep and blood pressure:** During normal, healthy sleep, blood pressure drops by 10% to 20%. Lacking sleep, your blood pressure may stay elevated, potentially leading to hypertension (high blood pressure).

**Sleep and artery disease (atherosclerosis):** Ongoing poor sleep triggers chronic inflammation and hardening of the arteries.

**Sleep and heart failure:** A study of 400,000 people revealed a strong connection between sleep problems and heart failure.

**Sleep and heart attack:** The deep non-REM (rapid eye movement) sleep phase helps your heart rate slow down and recover from stress. In one study, people sleeping fewer than six hours per night had a 20% higher chance of heart attack.

**Sleep and stroke:** Sleep deprivation increases blood pressure, a leading risk for strokes.

**Insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea** are common sleep problems affecting sleep time and quality. If you have ongoing poor sleep, wake up to solutions:

- Meet with your health care provider to identify obstacles to good sleep.
- Stick to a regular sleep schedule daily.
- Get regular exercise (avoid near bedtime).
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet.
- Avoid caffeine late in the day.
- Minimize screen use before bedtime.



February is  
American  
Heart Month.



## BEST bits

• Still haven't got a flu shot? Vaccination generally continues in February or later. Getting an annual flu vaccine is more important than ever. Flu vaccines will not prevent COVID-19, but they can reduce the burden of hospitalizations due to flu on our health care system and help conserve medical resources. The annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone age of six months and older (except those with a severe allergy to flu vaccines).

• Don't send your kids to school if they're sick. Illnesses spread quickly among children. Keep them home from school for at least 24 hours after symptoms disappear — longer if the illness is COVID-19. Children who have any COVID-19-related symptoms should (1) stay home and get tested and (2) only return to school after it's been at least ten days since onset of symptoms, symptoms have improved, and they've had no fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications.

• National Eating Disorders Awareness (NEDA) Week is February 6 to 12. Nearly 30 million Americans struggle with eating disorders, including anorexia, bulimia and binge eating. The NEDA Helpline offers support, resources and treatment options by phone, text and online chat for you or a loved one struggling with an eating disorder. Learn more at [nationaleatingdisorders.org](https://nationaleatingdisorders.org).

• Warning: The apps millions use to manage their health may not keep information private. The collecting of information from health apps used to check symptoms or manage a health condition is "a pervasive practice" and poses privacy risks to users who are unaware their information is being shared, according to researchers in a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

“Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong.” — Ella Fitzgerald

**Note:** Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date pandemic information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov).

 **The Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Checkup: Your Heart**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/22V2tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/22V2tools).

# Product Claims in the Food Aisles

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If a food label says a product is “low in sodium” or includes a lengthier explanation, such as “a diet low in total fat may reduce the risk of some cancers,” can you trust these claims to be true?

The FDA **does regulate** these claims, and they are only allowed to be used on food packages if the product meets strict criteria. So yes, these claims are true.

**But remember**, the claims alone cannot tell the whole story. For example, a package may claim that a food is “low in sodium,” but that statement alone doesn’t mean the product is nutritious or healthy. That same low-sodium product may also be high in sugar, saturated fat or preservatives, so it’s important to read the ingredients list and Nutrition Facts panel in addition to looking for any claims.



## COMMON CLAIMS

The FDA regulates three types of claims commonly found on food products:

### 1 Structure/function claims:

These claims tie nutrients to a specific purpose in the body, and usually relate to general well-being rather than to disease or health conditions. Examples include:

- Calcium builds strong bones.
- Fiber maintains bowel regularity.
- Antioxidants maintain cell integrity.
- DHA supports brain health.  
(Docosahexaenoic acid is essential for the growth and functional development of the brain in infants.)
- Probiotics support digestive health.
- Helps maintain a healthy cholesterol level.

### 2 Health claims:

These claims describe a relationship between a food and a reduced risk of a health condition. They are based on extensive reviews of nutritional science. Some examples you may see:

- On foods containing calcium: “Adequate calcium throughout life may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.”
- On low-sodium foods: “Diets low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a disease associated with many factors.”
- On foods containing folate: “Healthful diets with adequate folate may reduce a woman’s risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord birth defect.”

### 3 Nutrient content claims:

These claims provide information about whether the food is low or high in a particular nutrient, such as fat, salt, fiber, vitamins or minerals. They can also compare the level of a nutrient in a food to that of another food, using terms such as **more**, **reduced** and **lite**. Examples include:

- High fiber.
- Good source of vitamin D.
- Low fat.
- Low sodium.

Here’s what some common nutrient content claims mean:

- **Fat-free or sugar-free:** Less than 0.5 grams of fat or sugar.
- **Good source of:** Food contains 10-19% of the Daily Value of the nutrient.
- **High in:** Provides 20% or more of the Daily Value of a nutrient.
- **High fiber:** 5 or more grams of fiber.
- **Light:**  $\frac{1}{3}$  less calories or  $\frac{1}{2}$  the fat.
- **Low calorie:** Less than 40 calories.
- **Low fat:** 3 grams or less of fat.
- **Low sodium:** Less than 140 milligrams of sodium.

# Health Care Plan Basics

**One of the most valuable assets you will have in your lifetime is health care insurance.**

Understanding how your plan coverage works is vital to accessing your benefits, getting the right care and protecting your health.

**The first step to obtaining the proper care and benefits** available through your plan is to understand health insurance terminology. Following are some key definitions.

**In-network:** Refers to physicians, other care providers, and medical facilities that deliver patient services covered through your plan. In-network providers are generally the most cost-effective option.

**Waiting period:** Typically a period of 90 days after the start of employment before employees can enroll in their insurance plans.

**Open enrollment:** A window of time during which you can apply for health insurance or modify a plan to include your spouse and/or children.

**Pre-existing condition:** Any chronic disease, disability or other condition you have at the time you apply for health care coverage under your plan. In some cases, symptoms or ongoing treatments related to pre-existing conditions can increase your premium.

**Premium:** The amount you pay for health coverage each month.

**Deductible:** The amount you must pay out-of-pocket before your coverage starts. Typically, the lower your premium, the higher your deductible.

**Co-insurance:** The amount of money you owe to a medical provider once the deductible has been paid, usually a predetermined percentage of the total bill.

**Coordination of benefits:** A process applied by individuals who have two or more existing policies to ensure that their beneficiaries do not receive more than the combined maximum payout for the plans.

**Referral:** An official notice from a qualified physician to an insurer that recommends specialist treatment for a current policyholder.

**For more detailed information**

about your coverage, contact your health care plan’s customer service or use its members’ portal.





# Heart Attack Recovery

Although experiencing a heart attack is frightening, many people recover and live full lives after a heart attack. While it's not unusual to worry about another heart event occurring, talking openly with your health care provider about ways to help your heart attack recovery is important.

After a heart attack, your cardiologist will use imaging and other tests to see what heart damage may have occurred and how your heart is functioning. Then your health care team will create a treatment plan to help you recover from your heart attack and prevent experiencing another one.

According to the American Heart Association, these measures are key for heart attack recovery:

♥ **Take prescribed medications as directed.** Depending on your individual case, you may need treatment for high blood pressure and unhealthy blood cholesterol. Anticlotting drugs, such as aspirin, may be prescribed.

♥ **Commit to a healthy lifestyle.** Work with your health care provider to reach a healthy weight. If you smoke, create a quit plan with your provider. Following recommendations for a heart-healthy diet is important, too. *Continued on next page. >>*

## TIP of the MONTH

### Are You at Risk of Iron Deficiency?

Iron is an important mineral that plays a role in making red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body. A study shows that iron deficiency anemia is on the rise in the U.S., according to a study published in *The Journal of Nutrition* in July 2021. The increase in iron deficiency has been linked to lower red meat intake and low iron levels in the soil that our food is grown in. If you don't eat red meat, ask your health care provider to do a complete blood count. **Note:** Women with heavy menstrual periods are also at risk for iron deficiency.

# Winter Warm-Ups

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

## When the temperature drops, it's comforting to snuggle up with warm foods and drinks.

There are many great recipes that you can cook in winter, and you won't mind being stuck inside when the aroma from the kitchen entices your taste buds.

**Start with soups and stews.** You can add ingredients to a slow cooker, or simmer on the stovetop if you prefer. Most soups and stews start with a vegetable base (think carrots, onions, celery and mushrooms), which contribute to your daily intake. Most recipes then add protein, such as beans, lentils, chicken or fish, and are rounded out with a carb-boost from noodles, rice, quinoa or potato. It's a whole meal in a bowl.

**Oatmeal, porridge or congee is a great way to warm up at breakfast.** Add some protein with Greek yogurt, nuts and seeds, and serve with berries for a complete meal. And don't forget the warmth provided by beverages. Coffee and tea are great choices.



**Spice it up.** Adding spices to soups, oatmeal and warm drinks will provide a complexity of flavor, but spices have an additional benefit: They literally warm your body. One recent study found that drinking warm beverages infused with ginger provided longer-lasting warmth and improved cold sensitivity better than placebo beverages with no ginger. Try adding ginger to chicken soup or carrot-sweet-potato soup, or enjoy ginger tea. Add one teaspoon of fresh ginger to boiling water and steep for five minutes.

**You can also** use cinnamon or nutmeg in porridge, or add a dash of cayenne to chili or a blend of cumin, cardamom and turmeric to curries and stews.



eating smart

## Warming Chicken Stew

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil     | 1 tsp dried thyme                              |
| 1 onion, diced                    | 1½ lb boneless skinless chicken breasts, cubed |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced           | 2 cups potatoes, peeled and diced              |
| 1 tbsp fresh ginger, minced       | 3 cups low-salt chicken broth                  |
| 2 large carrots, peeled and diced | 1 tsp salt                                     |
| 2 stalks celery, diced            | ¼ cup freshly chopped parsley                  |
| 1 tbsp flour                      |  |

**Add** olive oil to a soup pot set over medium heat. **Add** onion, garlic, ginger, carrots and celery. **Cook** about 3-4 minutes. **Add** flour to coat vegetables, then add thyme, chicken, potatoes, broth and salt. **Simmer** 15-20 minutes, until potatoes are tender, and chicken reaches 165°F. **Serve** topped with parsley.

**Makes 4 servings. Per serving:** 319 calories | 39g protein | 8g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 4g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 22g carbohydrate | 5g sugar | 4g fiber | 432mg sodium

## EASY recipe



## Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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## EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

**Q:** What are the signs of a hoarding problem?



**A:** **Hoarding disorder, a relatively new diagnosis**, affects about 2.5% of men and women in the U.S. The three common characteristics of those who hoard are:

- Difficulty letting go of items.
- A compulsive tendency to buy or acquire possessions.
- Inability to keep things organized. (Collectors, in contrast, often keep their items carefully organized and display them proudly.)

About half of those who hoard suffer from **depression**, and many report difficulties with memory and attention as well. They are reluctant to part with belongings in the belief that they could be important in the future.

**Hoarding often causes family tension and can become a public health risk**, such as when someone's home becomes so cluttered that it would be difficult for emergency responders to navigate. Fortunately, some types of talk therapy have shown promise in treating this condition.

## Making Sense of Scents

**That lovely, scented shampoo you're using could be toxic.** That's right. The chemicals used to produce the scent can cause health problems in some people. The symptoms can range from mild to severe. Even products containing scents described as **natural** can affect some people.

**Scented products can emit many volatile organic compounds (VOCs)**, according to an *Environmental Health Perspectives* report from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. It found 133 unique VOCs among 25 products: 24 VOCs were classified as hazardous and only one was listed on any label.

**What can you do if you are sensitive to scents?**

**Read labels** and don't buy products when there is no information given other than the words

**fragrance, perfume, parfum or essential oil blend.** **Note:** Some brands are providing more information on their labels but check this website to be sure your product is safe: [ewg.org/skindeep](http://ewg.org/skindeep).

**Buy** and use unscented products. Caution: Even products branded as **fragrance-free** or **unscented** may still contain fragrance — check the ingredient label.

**Keep** your home, office and workspace well-ventilated.

**Keep** soaps, detergents and other cleaners in sealed containers and store them in a closed cabinet.

**Ask** if your workplace has a scent-free policy — especially if you are sensitive to fragrances.

**Stay aware** of others who may be sensitive to fragrances and scents. No person more than an arm's length away from you should be able to smell your fragrance.



## Heart Attack Recovery *Continued from previous page. >>*

♥ **Participate in a cardiac rehabilitation program.** Many people are afraid to exercise after a heart attack, but physical activity, especially if started slowly, can help heart attack recovery and improve your mood, too. Talk to your provider about the program that's right for you.

♥ **Get support.** Talk to caring friends and family members about your heart concerns. Sharing with other heart attack survivors can help.

♥ **Follow up with your provider regularly.** Keep all appointments and don't hesitate to contact your provider's office with any concerns.

