

New food guide in preventing cardiovascular diseases.

City-dwellers always blame urban eating style for causing cardiovascular diseases. Hypertension, diabetes, abnormal blood lipids, smoking, stress, obesity, lack of exercise and lack of fruits and vegetables in the diet explain 90% of the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

In Hong Kong, one out of ten people die from a heart attack, according to figures from the Health Department in 2003. In a recent study of nearly 2000 Hong Kong people conducted by the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong, half of the people over the age of 65 have hypertension while one third of them have diabetes.

A balanced diet can help to prevent cardiovascular diseases. The Food Pyramid has now been replaced by a new pyramid (MyPyramid.gov). The new pyramid emphasizes a balanced diet consisting of vegetables, fruits, whole-grain wheat, fat-free milk products, lean meats and fish with minimal sugar and salt intake. While the fat in red meat is to be avoided, some oils that come from fish and vegetables, such as olive oil, are healthy. The amount of calories you eat should be matched to your energy requirements; otherwise, you will become fat.

Exercise is a key part in the new recommendations. It should add up to at least 30 minutes a day. It strengthens cardiovascular function, speeds metabolism and helps to control body weight. Hill walking, playing badminton, swimming and dancing are all good examples of moderate exercise.