

Healthy eating for your heart

What does heart healthy eating mean to me?

Heart healthy eating is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Heart healthy eating, along with regular physical activity can help you to:

- improve your blood fats
- achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke

This handout will help you choose heart healthy foods to include as part of a healthy diet.

Why should I be concerned about my blood fats?

Blood fats include cholesterol and triglycerides. Abnormal blood fats increase your risk for heart disease and stroke. Blood fats are also called blood lipids.

What is blood cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a wax-like fatty substance in your blood. It is made in your body by the liver. Small amounts of cholesterol are important for many body functions. Too much blood cholesterol or fat can build up in your blood vessels and block the blood flow to your heart. This may lead to heart disease and stroke.

There are 2 types of cholesterol in your blood:

High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) Cholesterol

The H in HDL = Healthy or GOOD cholesterol

- HDL takes blood cholesterol back to your liver where it can be removed from your body. High levels are healthy for your heart.
- You can improve your HDL by getting more exercise.
- Target HDL for children is over 1 mmol/L.

Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) Cholesterol or "BAD" cholesterol

The L in LDL = Lousy or BAD cholesterol

- LDL leaves cholesterol in the walls of your arteries causing them to narrow over time. High levels can lead to heart disease.
- You can lower your LDL by eating less saturated fats, trans fats, and foods high in cholesterol.
- A psyllium fibre supplement (such as Metamucil[®]) may also help to lower LDL levels. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about whether a fibre supplement is right for you.
- Target LDL for children is under 3 mmol/L.

What are triglycerides?

- Triglycerides (TG) are another type of fat found in the blood. High triglyceride levels may also lead to heart disease.
 - You can lower triglyceride levels by consuming less sweet foods and drinks, and eating more whole grains instead of white grains.
 - Target TG for children is under 1.4 mmol/L
 - Omega 3 supplements may also help to lower TG levels. These supplements should only be taken with a doctor's supervision as there are some possible side effects.
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Will the cholesterol in my diet raise my blood cholesterol?

- Cholesterol in food can raise blood cholesterol in some people.
- Choose foods that are high in cholesterol less often.

This includes foods from animals, such as untrimmed or marbled meat, poultry with skin, organ meats such as liver, high fat milk products and egg yolks.

Try to fill up with more vegetables instead!

What about the fat in my diet?

The types of fat you eat can affect your blood cholesterol levels.

A healthy diet is low in saturated fat and trans fat.

Heart healthy fats

Healthy fats are **unsaturated** fats, including:

- ✓ Monounsaturated fat
- ✓ Polyunsaturated fat
- ✓ Omega-3 fat

Foods that have unsaturated fats include:

- olive, canola, soybean, peanut and other vegetable oils
- soft non-hydrogenated margarines
- nuts and seeds
- avocados
- fatty fish such as mackerel, herring, trout, salmon and sardines

Choose foods that have unsaturated fat more often.

Unhealthy fats

Unhealthy fats are the saturated and trans fats in your diet. These can raise your bad LDL cholesterol. Trans fat can also lower your good HDL cholesterol.

Foods that have saturated fat include:

- high fat processed meats such as sausage, bologna, salami and hot dogs
- fatty meats such as prime rib and regular ground beef
- full-fat dairy products such as whole milk, high fat cheese, cream, butter and lard
- coconut, palm and palm kernel oil

Foods that have trans fats include:

- shortening
- store-bought baked goods
- fast foods, deep fried foods and foods made with shortening or partially hydrogenated oils
- margarines made with partially hydrogenated oils

Choose foods that have saturated and trans fat less often.

What about fibre?

There are 2 types of fibre: soluble and insoluble. Both types are important for good health. Eating more soluble fibre can help to lower your risk of heart disease by lowering bad LDL cholesterol levels.

Foods that have soluble fibre include:

- dried or canned beans, peas and lentils
- whole grains such as oats, oat bran and barley
- cereal with psyllium fibre
- fresh fruits such as citrus fruit, apples, apricots, pears, prunes and strawberries
- vegetables such as artichoke, broccoli, brussel sprouts, carrots, corn and squash

Drink lots of fluids when you eat more foods with fibre.

What about salt?

If you have high blood pressure or heart failure, it is very important to limit the amount of salt or sodium that you eat.



Eating less salt is part of a heart-healthy diet

Here are some ways to eat less salt:

- Take the salt shaker off the table. Try seasoning your foods with herbs, spices and lemon juice instead.
- Do not use salt in cooking.
- Replace onion, garlic and celery salt with the fresh product or powder.
- Eat at fast food restaurants less often.
- Eat less cured and processed meats. This includes ham, sausage, bacon, hot dogs and bologna.
- Eat less processed or convenience foods that are high in salt or sodium. This includes canned soups, spaghetti or tomato sauce, processed cheese, soy sauce and pickles.

Summary: How to lower your risk of heart disease

1. Make these important changes in your diet:

- ✓ Limit saturated and trans fat. Choose heart healthy fats instead.
- ✓ Eat more fibre.
- ✓ Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Eat less salt or sodium.

2. Use low-fat cooking methods:

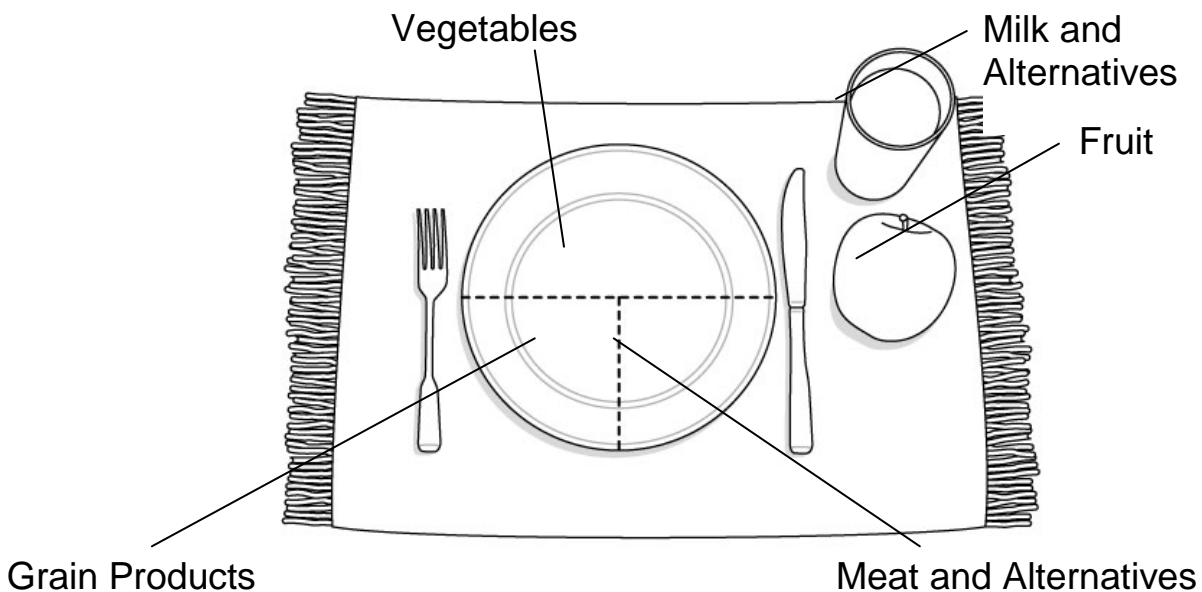
- bake
- broil
- grill
- steam
- barbeque
- poach
- microwave
- use a non-stick pan

How to build a healthy meal

Heart healthy eating means enjoying a variety of foods from all 4 food groups in 'Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide':

- ✓ **Vegetables and Fruit** – Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with a variety of vegetables. Choose dark green, red and orange colours more often. Have a piece of fruit for dessert.
- ✓ **Grain Products** – Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with whole grain products such as rice, pasta or breads.
- ✓ **Meat and Alternatives** – Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with healthy, low fat meat and alternatives such as fish, legumes (peas, beans and lentils), tofu or small portions of lean meats.
- ✓ **Milk and Alternatives** – Have a glass of low fat milk or a small container of yogurt to complete your meal.

Building a healthy meal is simple! Use this picture as a guide.



You can get a copy of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide from Health Canada's website: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

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✓ Foods recommended	✗ Foods NOT recommended
Meat and alternatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fish, especially fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, and mackerel • lean cuts of meat with visible fat trimmed off such as strip loin or round • skinless chicken or turkey • peas, beans and lentils • egg whites or substitutes • soy based meat alternatives such as tofu and textured vegetable protein (TVP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deep fried chicken wings or battered fish • meat with visible fat • chicken or turkey with skin • organ meats: liver, kidney • regular luncheon meat, bacon, sausage or hot dogs • more than 3 egg yolks each week
Milk and alternatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skim or 1% milk, yogurt, cottage cheese • lower fat cheese (less than 20% M.F.) • low fat ice cream (1% M.F.), frozen yogurt (2% M.F.), sherbet • fortified soy beverages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full fat milk & dairy products
Vegetables and Fruit	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all, except coconut and battered or deep fried vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coconut • battered or deep fried vegetables
Grain Products	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole grain breads, cereals, pasta and rice • low fat snack foods such as air popped popcorn and low sodium pretzels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commercial baked goods, such as cakes, pies, donuts and croissants • high fat snack foods such as potato chips and cheesies
Fats and Oils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft, non-hydrogenated margarine • olive, canola, soybean, peanut and other vegetable oils • salad dressings such as oil and vinegar or low fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular sauces and gravies • cream cheese, creamy salad dressings and full fat mayo • butter, cream, lard and shortening • coconut or palm oil

