

Healthy eating for your heart

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

What does heart healthy eating mean to me?

Heart healthy eating, along with an active lifestyle and choosing to be smoke-free can help you to:

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



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?

Your Number: _____ Target: _____

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 or stroke or both.

There are 2 types of cholesterol in your blood:

1. High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) Cholesterol

Think of **HDL** as your “**H**ealthy” cholesterol.

Your Number: _____ Target: _____

HDL takes blood cholesterol back to your liver where it can be removed from your body. High levels are healthy for your heart.

These lifestyle changes can help increase your HDL cholesterol:

- ✓ **Get active.** Aim to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day.
- ✓ **Stop smoking.**
- ✓ **Choose healthy fats.** This includes both plant and fish fats. Read more about healthy fats and what foods contain them on page 6.



2. Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) Cholesterol

Think of LDL as your “Lousy” cholesterol

Your Number: _____ Target: _____

LDL leaves cholesterol in the walls of your arteries causing them to narrow over time.



High levels of LDL can lead to heart disease.

These lifestyle changes can help decrease your LDL cholesterol:

- ✓ **Eat foods high in soluble fibre.** Add whole grains, fresh fruit, beans, lentils, nuts/seeds, and vegetables such as broccoli or carrots to increase your intake. See page 7 for more information.
- ✓ **Limit processed and red meat.** See page 6 for more information.
- ✓ **Limit foods with trans fat.** Trans fat has been shown to not only increase your “bad” cholesterol, but it also decreases your “good” cholesterol.
- ✓ **Relax.** Some studies show that increased stress can lead to higher LDL cholesterol levels. Develop heart healthy ways to manage the stress in your life. For more information ask your health care provide for the HHS patient education handout, “Dealing with Stress”.



What are triglycerides?

Your Number: _____ Target: _____

Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood. High triglycerides are linked to heart disease.



Important
Information

These lifestyle changes can help to decrease your triglyceride level:

- ✓ **Increase foods with omega-3 fatty acids.** Omega-3 fatty acids can help to decrease triglyceride levels. Read more about omega-3s and what foods contain them on page 6.
- ✓ **Maintain a healthy body weight.** Losing a small amount of weight can lead to a decrease in triglyceride levels.
- ✓ **Get active.** Aim to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day.
- ✓ **Limit sugar.** Be mindful of the amount of added sugar in food items such as cereal, drinks such as pop or juice, baked goods and sweets or desserts. Limiting your intake of these high-sugar items can lower your triglyceride levels.
- ✓ **Limit alcohol.** If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Limit your intake to 1 drink a day if you are a woman of any age or a man aged older than 65.

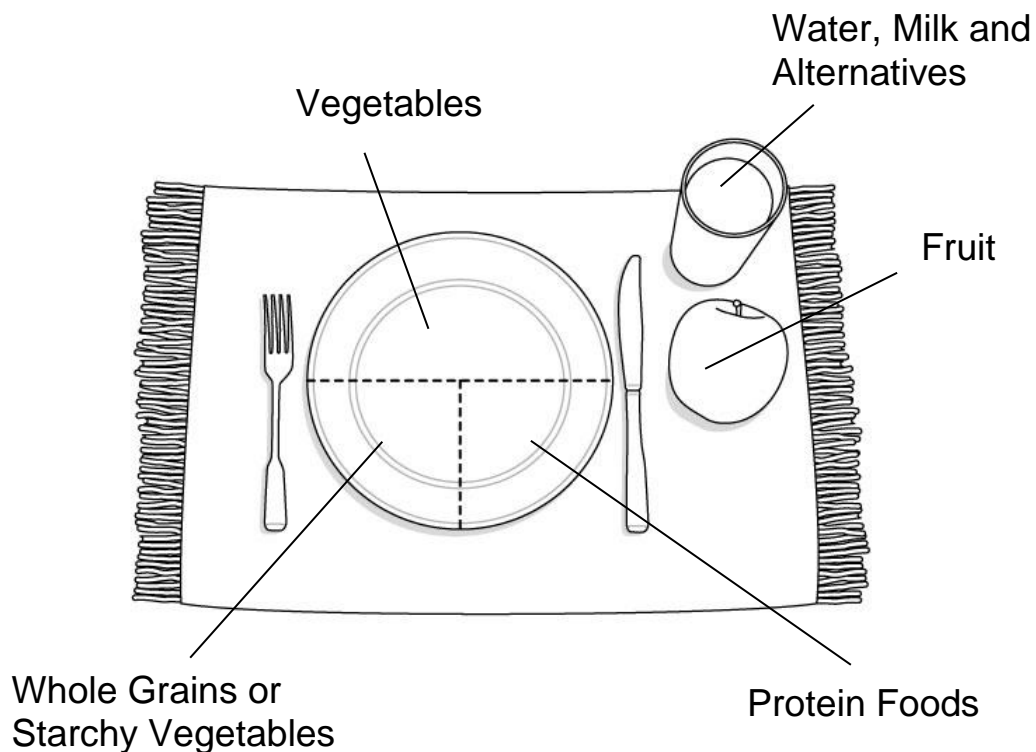
For men aged 65 or younger, limit your intake to 2 drinks a day or less.



What do healthy servings look like?

- ✓ Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with vegetables (such as broccoli, asparagus, green beans, carrots, lettuce or other green leafy vegetables). Vegetables contain fibre, plenty of vitamins and minerals and are low in calories.
- ✓ Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with whole grains or starchy vegetables such as potatoes (white or sweet) or corn.
- ✓ Fill the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with protein foods such as fish, lean meats, eggs, meatless protein choices such as legumes (kidney beans, black beans, chickpeas or lentils) or tofu.
- ✓ Have a glass of water, milk or milk alternative (fortified soy beverage) and a piece of fruit to complete your meals.

Use this picture as a guideline to help you keep healthy servings on your plate.



What about the fat in my diet?

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

Healthy fats:

Healthy fats **do not raise your blood cholesterol levels.** They include: monounsaturated fat, polyunsaturated fat and omega-3 fat.

Choose more often:

- olive, canola, soybean, peanut and other vegetable oils
- soft non-hydrogenated margarines
- nuts such as almonds, walnuts, brazil nuts or pistachios
- seeds such as flaxseed, chia seeds, or pumpkin seeds
- avocados
- fatty fish such as mackerel, herring, trout, tuna and salmon



Unhealthy fats:

Unhealthy fats can raise your LDL cholesterol. They include saturated and trans fats. Trans fat can also decrease your good HDL cholesterol. Limit your intake of foods that have unhealthy fats.

Choose less often:

- red meats such as prime rib, regular ground beef, pork, veal, ham and goat
- full fat dairy products such as whole milk, high fat cheese, cream, and butter
- coconut, palm and palm kernel oil
- lard



Avoid:

- processed meats such as sausage, bologna, salami and hot dogs
- shortening and foods made with shortening such as peanut butter or canned icing
- store bought baked goods such as cookies, cakes, pastries and muffins
- deep fried foods
- foods made with partially hydrogenated oils such as some types of margarine

**What about fibre?**

There are 2 types of dietary fibre: soluble and insoluble. Both types of fibre are important for good health.

**Fibre can:**

- ✓ Lower bad LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- ✓ Delay stomach emptying, leading to slower digestion of food. This can help to keep you full for a longer period of time.

Choose more often:

- dried or canned legumes such as kidney beans, black beans, chick peas, and lentils
- whole grains such as oats, oat bran, barley, buckwheat, bulgur and quinoa
- psyllium fibre
- all whole fruits such as citrus fruit, apples, apricots, pears, prunes and strawberries
- all whole vegetables such as artichoke, broccoli, brussel sprouts, carrots, corn and squash

Am I getting enough fibre in my diet?

Most Canadians only get half the amount of fibre they need each day. Aim to eat a total of 25 to 38 grams of fibre a day.

Before you increase your fibre ...

Be sure to drink more water.

Your body will need to adjust to more fibre in your diet. Increasing fibre too quickly or without drinking enough water may cause gas, bloating, cramping, diarrhea or constipation.



What about salt?

A heart healthy eating pattern is lower in salt (sodium). Most of the sodium in your diet comes from processed foods, restaurants or take out meals.

Ways to reduce salt or sodium in your diet include:

- ✓ Cook at home with whole foods more often.
- ✓ 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 less deli and processed meats (ham, sausage, bacon, hot dogs, bologna).
- ✓ Eat less processed or convenience foods that are high in salt or sodium (canned soups, processed cheese, soy sauce, pickles).



Heart healthy eating

Limits

- × Ready-to-eat or processed foods and drinks.
- × Processed and red meats.
- × Using sugar and salt.

Cooking (from scratch) is the single most important thing we could do as a family to improve our health and general well-being. *Michael Pollan*

Heart healthy eating includes...

- ✓ Foods that are closest to their whole natural form, such as whole fruits and vegetables and whole grain products.
- ✓ Home cooking with whole foods more often.
- ✓ An overall healthy eating pattern, not one specific food group or item. Try including a variety and balance of different food choices.
- ✓ Eating until you are comfortably full, not stuffed or feeling sick.
- ✓ Eating with others, such as friends, family, or co-workers whenever possible.
- ✓ Fish, legumes and nuts several times a week.
- ✓ Vegetables, fresh fruit, or nuts/seeds as snacks.
- ✓ Plenty of water throughout the day.

Also include at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day.



Recipes



Vegetarian Chili Serves 4 (8 grams fibre per cup)

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 2 medium zucchini, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 12 ounces extra-firm tofu cut into small pieces
- 2 cans (14 ounces each) diced tomatoes with no added salt
- 1 can (14 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (14 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon oregano

Directions:

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions, zucchini, green pepper and tofu, sauté until soft, about 6 minutes. Add the tomatoes, beans, chili powder and oregano. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

Minestrone Soup Serves 4 (4 grams fibre per cup)



- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 carrot, diced
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- 4 cups chicken broth, unsalted
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup spinach, chopped
- 1 can red kidney beans, rinsed
- ½ cup whole grain shell pasta, uncooked
- 1 zucchini, diced

Directions:

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, carrot and celery sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the broth, tomatoes, spinach, kidney beans and pasta, bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for about 10 minutes. Add in the zucchini, cover and cook for another 10 minutes.
