

Heart disease and diet

Definition:

A healthy diet is a major factor in reducing your risk of heart disease.

Alternative Names:

Diet - heart disease

Function:

A healthy diet and lifestyle can reduce your risk of:

- [Heart disease](#), heart attacks, and stroke
- Conditions that lead to heart disease, including [high cholesterol](#), high blood pressure, and [obesity](#)
- Other chronic health problems, including [type 2 diabetes](#), [osteoporosis](#), and some forms of cancer

Recommendations:

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Most fruits and vegetables are part of a heart-healthy diet. They are good sources of [fiber](#), vitamins, and minerals. Most are low in [fat](#), calories, sodium, and cholesterol.

Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

GRAINS

Eat low-fat breads, cereals, crackers, rice, pasta, and starchy vegetables (such as peas, potatoes, corn, winter squash, and lima beans). These foods are high in the B vitamins, iron, and fiber. They are also low in fat and cholesterol.

Eat six or more servings per day of grain products, including whole grains. Grain products provide fiber, vitamins, minerals, and complex carbohydrates. Be careful about eating too many grains, however.

Avoid baked goods such as butter rolls, cheese crackers, and croissants, cream sauces for pasta and vegetables, and cream soups.

EATING HEALTHY PROTEIN

Meat, poultry, seafood, dried peas, lentils, nuts, and eggs are good sources of protein, B

vitamins, iron, and other vitamins and minerals.

- Avoid duck, goose, marbled meats (such as a ribeye steak), prime cuts of high-fat meats, organ meats such as kidneys and liver, and prepared meats such as sausage, hot dogs, and [high-fat](#) lunch meats.
- Eat no more than 6 cooked ounces of meat, poultry, and fish daily. One serving of these foods should be about the size of a deck of cards on your plate.
- Trim off all the visible fat before cooking the meat.
- Eat two servings of fish per week.
- Cook by baking, broiling, roasting, steaming, boiling, or microwaving rather than deep frying.
- For the main entree, use less meat or have meatless meals a few times a week. Use smaller amounts of meat to reduce the total fat content of the meal.
- Use skinless turkey, chicken, fish, or lean red meat to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet. You may occasionally eat lean, 3-ounce cuts of red meat.
- Do not use more than three or four egg yolks per week, including the eggs you use in cooking.
- Eat less organ meat (such as liver) and shellfish (such as shrimp and lobster)

Milk and other dairy products are good sources of protein, calcium, the B vitamins niacin and riboflavin, and vitamins A and D. Use skim or 1% milk. Cheese, yogurt, and buttermilk should be low-fat or non-fat.

FATS, OILS, AND CHOLESTEROL

A diet high in saturated fat causes cholesterol to build up in your arteries (blood vessels). Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance that can cause clogged or blocked arteries. This puts you at risk for heart attack, stroke, and other major health problems. Avoid or limit foods that are high in saturated fats.

- Limit total fat intake to 25 - 35% of your total daily calories. Keep saturated fats to only 10% of your total daily calories.
- Foods with a lot of saturated fats are animal products such as butter, cheese, whole milk, ice cream, sour cream, lard, and fatty meats such as bacon.
- Some vegetable oils (coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils) also contain saturated fats. These fats are solid at room temperature.
- Use no more than 5 - 8 teaspoons of fats or oils per day for salads, cooking, and baking.
- Eat less than 300 mg of dietary cholesterol each day. (One egg yolk contains an average of 213 mg of cholesterol.)

Some fats are better choices than others, but you should still use them in moderate amounts.

Think about the following when picking a margarine:

- Choose soft margarine (tub or liquid) over harder stick forms.
- Choose margarines with liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient. Even better, choose "light" margarines that list water as the first ingredient. These are even lower in saturated fat.
- Avoid hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats (read the ingredient labels).

Trans fatty acids are unhealthy fats that form when vegetable oil hardens in a process called hydrogenation. They are often used to keep foods fresh for a long time, and for cooking in fast

food restaurants.

- Trans fats can raise LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels in your blood. They can also lower your HDL ("good") cholesterol levels.
- Avoid fried foods, commercial baked goods (donuts, cookies, and crackers), processed foods, and hard margarines.

OTHER TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

Talking to a registered dietitian is helpful. The American Heart Association has local chapters in every state. They are also an excellent resource for information on heart disease.

Maintain your ideal body weight and balance the number of calories you eat with the number you use each day. You can ask a dietitian or a health care professional to help you determine these numbers. Limit your intake of foods high in calories or low in nutrition, including foods like soft drinks and candy that contain a lot of sugar.

Eat less than 2,400 mg of salt per day. Cut down on salt by reducing the amount of salt you add to food at the table. Also limit prepared foods that have salt added to them, such as canned soups and vegetables, cured meats, and some frozen meals. Always check the nutrition label for the sodium content per serving.

Exercise regularly. For example, walk for at least 30 minutes a day.

Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Women should have no more than one alcoholic drink (such as red wine) per day. Men should not have more than two alcoholic drinks each day.