

Heart Healthy Diet: Low Fat, Low Cholesterol, Low Sodium Diet

Purpose of the diet

- Control and / or decrease levels of cholesterol in your blood.
- Control and / or decrease blood pressure and / or fluid retention.

Cholesterol

This fat-like substance is necessary for good health. However, high levels in the blood can cause heart and blood vessel diseases. Our bodies make cholesterol. We also get it from eating foods from animals (meats, milk, eggs, cheese, butter). Foods from plants (fruits, vegetables, grains) **do not** contain cholesterol.

Saturated fats

These fats are generally solid at room temperature. They tend to increase blood cholesterol levels.

Trans fatty acids

These are fats that can raise cholesterol levels like saturated fat does. Trans fats are usually listed as partially hydrogenated oils.

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats

These fats are generally liquid at room temperature. Some can lower blood cholesterol levels.

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Learn more about your health care.

How can I lower my blood cholesterol level?

- **Decrease total fat intake, especially saturated and trans fats.**

Saturated fats are mainly in animal foods. Trans fats come mostly from partially hydrogenated plant oils. Foods that may contain trans fats include store bought baked goods, non-dairy whipped toppings, cream substitutes, some crackers and cookies, and many deep fried foods. To check for trans fats in a food, look for any oil that is “partially hydrogenated” in the ingredients on food labels. If a food has less than half a gram of trans fat per serving, the food manufacturer can list “zero grams of trans fat” on the food label, so it is best to check the ingredients for partially hydrogenated oils.

- **Limit high cholesterol foods.**

Egg yolks, fatty meats, organ meats, butter, whole milk and other high fat dairy products are high cholesterol foods.

- **Substitute monounsaturated fat or polyunsaturated fat for saturated fat in your diet.**

Monounsaturated fats include olive oil, peanut oil and canola oil. Safflower, corn and sunflower oils, and most margarines and salad dressings are examples of polyunsaturated fats. Also, fish has a higher content of polyunsaturated fat than red meat.

- ▶ **A special note on fish:**

Many fish are low fat. Some fish that have a higher fat content such as salmon are high in a kind of fat called omega 3 fatty acids. This type of fat has been shown to be very heart healthy. It is recommended to eat fish three times a week for this reason. One caution: consider how you prepare it so that you don't add large amounts of undesired fats. Baking, broiling, grilling or poaching fish is best.

What is sodium?

Sodium is a mineral that is necessary for good health and is present in all foods. Most people eat more sodium than they need. If the body cannot get rid of the extra sodium, fluid builds up. Extra fluid increases the work of the heart and kidneys, and may increase blood pressure. Eating less sodium may help control these problems. You will sometimes see the term sodium abbreviated "Na", as in NaCl (Sodium Chloride) which is table salt. The recommended sodium intake per day for most people is no more than 2300 milligrams (mg). Your doctor or dietitian may have you consume less sodium depending on your health.

How can I limit sodium?

To control sodium in your diet, you need to:

- **Limit salt since it is the major source of sodium in our diets.**
Do not add salt to food at the table.
- **Avoid food where large amounts of salt and / or sodium have been added.**
This includes frozen dinners, cured meats and lunchmeats, pickles, potato chips, sauerkraut, processed cheese foods and most canned products such as soup, vegetables and pasta sauces.
- **Use herbs and spices to help flavor foods.**

If you are overweight:

If you are at your ideal body weight, it is important that you avoid any weight gain. If you are overweight, weight loss can be helpful in lowering your cholesterol and blood pressure. To lose weight, you will need to decrease the number of calories you eat. The diet changes used to control cholesterol are helpful in controlling calories as well.

To control your weight:

- **Limit the total amount of fat in your diet.**
Avoid fried foods and limit fats, even healthier high fat foods such as margarine, vegetable oils and salad dressings. Although monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are a better choice, these fats should also be used in moderation because all sources of fat are equally high in calories.
- **Keep serving sizes moderate.**
Keep in mind that all foods have calories, so avoid large amounts and second helpings. Portion control is very important in maintaining or losing weight.
- **Satisfy your appetite.**
Raw vegetables, sugar free soda pops, water and other calorie free beverages can help satisfy your appetite. Pick caffeine free beverages as your doctor or dietitian directs.
- **Do not skip meals.**
This often leads to overeating at the next meal.
- **If you have diabetes, eat to control your blood sugar levels.**
Limiting total calories and high amounts of carbohydrates can help keep your blood sugar levels in control.

- **Be as active as possible.**

Being active will help you lose weight, because your body burns stored calories. If your activity is restricted, non-strenuous activities may be used. Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

A Summary of Diet Changes

- Decrease total fat intake, especially saturated and trans fats.
- Limit high cholesterol foods.
- Avoid using salt and eating foods high in salt.
- Control and/or lose body weight.
- Maintain a balanced diet.

Guidelines for Meal Planning

Meat and Meat Substitutes

Use:

- Chicken, turkey (remove skin)
- Fish, canned tuna or salmon (packed in water), shell fish. Shrimp and crayfish are higher in cholesterol than other fish but lower in fat and cholesterol than most meats and poultry.
- Lean beef, fresh pork, veal or lamb, (trim all fat). Limit to 3 servings (3 oz each) a week. These are considered "Red Meats." Leanest cuts include beef round, sirloin, loin, rump or pork tenderloin, sirloin, or loin roast.
- Dried beans and peas (cook without adding meat fat)
- Low-cholesterol eggs or egg whites
- Vegetable patties (watch for high sodium)
- Casseroles and mixed dishes made with allowed ingredients
- Tofu

Avoid Using:

- Fatty, well marbled meats, poultry skin
- Sausage, wieners, lunch meats
- Cured meats such as ham, corned beef, pastrami, salami, pepperoni
- Regular frozen TV dinners and entrees, pot pies, canned or packaged entrees (such as Hamburger Helper), frozen or store made pizza
- Restaurant prepared Chinese, Italian or Mexican foods

Limit:

- Egg yolks - The American Heart Association no longer makes recommendations on how many egg yolks to eat or not to eat. A good, general guideline is to eat no more than 1 egg yolk a day, up to 5 total a week. There is no restriction on egg whites (including those used in baking and cooking).
- Peanut butter (one tablespoon once or twice per week if you are trying to lose weight)
- Liver (one 3-ounce serving per week as a substitute for one egg yolk)

Tips:

- Since poultry and fish are generally lower in fat than red meats (beef, pork, lamb), include these more often at meals.
- Preparation: bake, broil, boil, grill, roast, or pan broil without adding fat. (Use a non-stick skillet or vegetable spray, such as Pam.)
- If a frozen TV dinner is eaten on occasion, choose one that has no more than 600 mg sodium and 10 grams fat.
- Consider having fish and vegetarian meals more often.

Milk and Dairy Products**Use:**

- Skim or 1% milk
- Fat free and low-fat yogurt. Choose "lite" versions if trying to lose weight.
- Homemade cocoa or chocolate milk made from skim milk
- Instant cocoa made with skim milk powder
- Low-fat or fat-free sour cream
- Low-fat buttermilk
- Low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
- Low-fat or low-cholesterol cheeses
- Reduced-fat or fat-free cream cheese
- Low-fat soy milk

Avoid Using:

- 2% and Whole Milk
- Buttermilk, chocolate milk or cocoa made from whole milk
- Instant cocoa mixes with palm or coconut oil or butterfat added

- Yogurt made with whole milk
- Cream, half and half, sour cream, whipped cream, non-dairy or frozen whipped toppings
- Processed cheeses and cheese foods that have more than 5 grams fat per serving.
- Natural cheese made with whole milk or cream

Breads and Starches

Use:

- Whole grain or enriched breads and cereals, bagels, English muffins
- Melba toast, matzo, unsalted top saltines, graham crackers, rye wafers, low salt crackers
- Homemade stuffing or dressing prepared with recommended ingredients and not cooked inside the poultry cavity (bake in separate dish)
- Homemade biscuits, muffins, pancakes, waffles, cornbread made with allowed ingredients. Egg substitutes can be used instead of whole eggs in these products.
- Spaghetti, noodles, macaroni, rice, tortillas (whole wheat are best)
- Salt-free pretzels; salt-free, air-popped popcorn; reduced fat microwave popcorn. Limit fat free potato chips to a 1 oz. serving per day.
- Baked goods (cookies, cakes, etc.) made with allowed ingredients. If you have diabetes, these foods should be consumed in very moderate amounts.

Avoid Using:

- Commercially prepared biscuits, muffins, pancakes, waffles, cornbread, donuts, sweet rolls, coffee cakes, packaged nut breads, cakes, pies, cookies.
- Egg noodles, packaged breading and stuffing mixes, seasoned rice mixes, soy meat extenders, and any mix that comes out of a box. (These are usually very high in sodium.)
- Salted crackers, corn chips, potato chips, pretzels

Vegetables and Fruits

Use:

- All raw or fresh cooked vegetables, plain frozen vegetables, or salt-free canned vegetables; all fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruits; preferably packed in natural juice or water.

- Canned tomato puree and tomato paste may be used in recipes but **do not** add salt.
- Homemade tomato sauce without added salt, or store bought low sodium sauce.
- Frozen French fries. Do not add salt. Bake, rather than fry them.
- Pan fried potatoes in minimum amount of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oil (vegetable, canola or olive oil).
- All fruit juices and salt-free vegetable juices.

Avoid Using:

- Sauerkraut
- Vegetables cooked with meat fat (such as greens)
- Frozen vegetables in cream, cheese, or butter sauce
- Pickled vegetables
- Packaged potato mixes (escaloped, au gratin)
- Regular canned vegetables (if used on occasion, drain & rinse vegetables, and cook in fresh water)
- Regular V-8 or tomato juice

Limit:

- Regular tomato sauce (2 cup per day)
- Reduced sodium tomato juice (like V-8)

Tips:

If you are trying to lose weight, raw vegetables and fresh fruits are low in calories and make satisfactory snacks.

Fats and Oils

Use:

- Liquid vegetable oils: canola, olive, safflower, corn, sunflower, soy, cottonseed, peanut
- Soft tub margarines that list "liquid vegetable oil" or water as the first ingredient. Use "squeeze" or spray margarines for the least amount of saturated fats.
- Low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Homemade sauces made with allowed ingredients

Avoid Using:

- Coconut oil, palm oil, partially hydrogenated oils and products using these oils
- Tartar sauce
- Butter, lard, salt pork, bacon, meat fat, sour cream, gravy (mixes, canned, or made from meat drippings), cream and cheese sauces
- Margarine which list "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" as the first ingredient
- Salad dressings: Roquefort or Bleu cheese, any containing cheese or sour cream, creamy varieties, store bought slaw dressing, real mayonnaise

Limit:

- All nuts if you are monitoring or trying to lose weight. Limit nuts to a small handful (about 15 nuts) a day. Salt free nuts are best.

Miscellaneous

Use:

- Homemade soups made with recommended ingredients; salt-free canned, broth based soups; salt-free bouillon. When making soups from meat broth, cool broth in refrigerator until fat rises to the top and hardens. Remove fat, and then add vegetables.

Avoid Using:

- Regular canned, frozen or instant soups; bouillon cubes or granules
- Soups made with ham or ham bones
- Soups served in restaurants, unless advertised as low fat, low salt

Snacks, Sweets, Desserts and Beverages

If you have diabetes, limit foods with large amounts of sugar. If your doctor tells you to limit your fluids, check with him or her on what your limit is. One cup of fluid equals 8 ounces. Anything liquid at room temperature is a fluid including ice cream, jell-o, soup and popsicles.

Use:

- Unsalted popcorn, unsalted pretzels
- Regular or sugar-free gum and mints, sugar, brown sugar, molasses, honey, syrups, fructose, gum drops, hard candy

- Regular or sugar-free soda pop, Gatorade, canned sweetened fruit drinks, Kool-Aid, decaffeinated coffee, tea, iced tea
- Homemade cakes, cookies and pies in moderation, made with recommended oils and margarine.
- Ice milk, low-fat frozen yogurt, sherbet, sorbet, popsicles in moderation
- Pudding made from skim or 1% milk

Avoid Using:

- Salted popcorn, potato chips, corn chips, pretzels and other salted and/or deep fried snack foods
- Chocolate, candy bars
- Store bought pies, cakes and cookies, cake mixes, pie crusts, canned puddings and pie fillings

Condiments

Use:

- Mrs. Dash
- Vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, garlic powder, onion powder, herbs and spices, salt substitute
- Horseradish
- Catsup and mustard (No more than 2 tablespoons per day because of sodium content)

Avoid Using:

- Meat tenderizer, monosodium glutamate (MSG), seasoned salt, onion salt, celery salt, Morton Lite Salt, sea salt, spice blends which contain salt, seasoning mixes
- Baking powder, baking soda (use as an ingredient for baking only)
- Chili sauce, soy sauce, steak sauces, BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce, cooking wine, cooking sherry
- Dill pickles, sweet pickles, pickle relish, olives, imitation bacon bits

Other tips

- **Read all labels.**

Avoid products which contain shortening, vegetable shortening, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, lard, butter, beef suet, animal or chicken fat, bacon, cream, salt and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

- **Check all medicines with your doctor.**

Commonly used medicines for indigestion which are high in sodium include Alka Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer, Roloids, some laxatives, pain relievers, antibiotics and cough medicines.

- **Remember, the fresher the better.**

You will cut down on your sodium, fat and cholesterol if you make your own food with acceptable food items.

If you have questions, call the Department of Nutrition Services at (614) 293-8658.

❖ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**