



Heart healthy nutrition

If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or heart failure, your provider will recommend lifestyle changes such as a heart-healthy diet as part of your treatment. A heart-healthy diet limits the amount of saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium you consume. Additionally, a heart-healthy diet promotes intake of fiber and heart-healthy (unsaturated) fats. When a heart-healthy diet is prescribed to you by your health care provider, it can seem overwhelming! The following information will help you to introduce these lifestyle changes, and can help to promote better overall health.

Total cholesterol:

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that's found in the blood. Cholesterol has many important functions that help to keep you healthy. Cholesterol is made in the body and also comes from foods you eat (mostly animal products). When your cholesterol levels are too high, you are at a greater risk of developing heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

To reduce your total cholesterol:

1. Achieve desirable body weight or moderate weight loss (5-10 percent of current weight)
2. Reduce saturated fat and trans fat in your diet
3. Include heart-healthy unsaturated fats in your diet
4. Increase soluble fiber intake

LDL cholesterol:

Considered the bad cholesterol because it causes cholesterol (fat) or plaque to build up in veins and arteries, which can eventually lead to a blockage. The higher your levels of LDL cholesterol, the higher your risk of developing heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

To reduce your LDL cholesterol:

1. Achieve desirable body weight or moderate weight loss (5-10 percent of current weight)
2. Reduce saturated fat and trans fat in your diet
3. Increase soluble fiber intake

HDL cholesterol:

Considered the good cholesterol because it carries cholesterol (fat) out of the blood stream before it can damage veins and arteries and lead to plaque buildup. The higher your levels of HDL cholesterol, the lower your risk of developing heart disease, heart attack and stroke. The higher your HDL cholesterol, the better!

To increase your HDL cholesterol:

1. Achieve a desirable body weight or moderate weight loss (5-10 percent of current weight)
2. Increase your level of physical activity
3. If you are a smoker, quitting smoking can increase your HDL cholesterol by up to 10 percent

Triglycerides:

A type of fat that is found in your blood. Triglyceride levels are most affected by the foods we eat. A diet high in fat, sugar and/or alcohol can increase your level of triglycerides. The higher your levels of triglycerides, the higher your risk of developing heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

To reduce your total triglycerides:

1. Achieve a desirable body weight or moderate weight loss (5-10 percent of current weight)
2. Increase your level of physical activity
3. Avoid refined grains and added sugars
4. Limit alcohol
5. Reduce the amount of saturated fat and trans fat in your diet
6. Lower total fat and calories in your diet
7. Control portions, especially of carbohydrates
8. Increase intake of omega-3s

| Nutrients | Sources | | Effect on heart health |
|--|--|---|--|
| Saturated fat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatty meats – beef (T-bone steak, 80/20 hamburger), lamb, pork (ribs), poultry (with skin), bacon, sausage, salami, bologna, hot dogs, organ meats (liver) High fat dairy products – cream, whole and 2 percent milk and cheese Egg yolks Butter, lard, stick margarine, shortening Plant-based oils – palm, palm kernel and coconut oil | | ↑ LDL cholesterol (BAD cholesterol) |
| Trans fat (Limit as much as possible!) | “Partially hydrogenated oils” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercially produced baked goods – pastries, biscuits, muffins, cakes, cookies, pies, and doughnuts Fried foods – french fries, fried chicken, chicken nuggets, and breaded and fried fish Pre-packaged snack foods – popcorn, crackers and potato chips Stick margarine and vegetable shortening | | ↑ LDL cholesterol ↓ HDL cholesterol (GOOD cholesterol) |
| Monounsaturated fat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuts and seeds – almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, pistachios Avocados and olives Fish – especially fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout) Mayonnaise and soft (tub) margarine Oils – canola, olive, peanut and sesame | | ↓ LDL cholesterol ↑ HDL cholesterol |
| Polyunsaturated fat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuts and seeds – chia seeds, flax seeds (milled), pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds and walnuts Wheat germ Soft (tub) margarine Fish and seafood – especially fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout) Oils – corn, flax, safflower, soybean, sunflower | | ↓ LDL cholesterol |
| Fiber | Soluble fiber: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flaxseeds and chia seeds Fruits and vegetables Legumes (beans, lentils, etc.) Oat-based products Whole grain products | Insoluble fiber: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bran Fruits & vegetables Whole grain products | ↓ LDL cholesterol |
| Sodium (salt) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned foods – soup, sauces, gravy, vegetables, broth/stock Frozen foods – entrees, dinners, or vegetables with sauces Snack foods – chips, popcorn, pretzels, and crackers Instant/quick cooking foods – seasoned noodles or rice, stuffing mix, macaroni and cheese, potatoes and cereals Baking mixes – cornbread, biscuits, cakes and pudding Meats – deli, cured, smoked, or canned Cheese – especially processed varieties (American, Velveeta®, or cheeses in a jar or can) Condiments, sauces and seasoning salts Pickles and olives | | ↑ Blood pressure |