



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Heart Healthy Eating Tips

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# Heart Healthy Eating Tips

Healthy eating can lower your risk of heart disease by helping you:

- › control your weight.
- › lower your cholesterol.
- › prevent or control high blood pressure.

Heart healthy eating focuses on:

- › healthy fats instead of saturated and trans fats.
- › less sodium (salt).
- › more fibre.

## **Eat less saturated and trans fats.**

### **1. Eat less of these high fat foods:**

- › Fried foods
- › Fatty cuts of meat
- › Processed meats (like bacon, ham, deli meats)
- › Gravies and cream sauces
- › Foods with trans fats
- › Potato chips

### **2. Use low fat ways to cook, such as:**

- › Broil
- › Steam
- › Bake
- › Poach
- › Barbecue
- › Microwave

### **3. Buy low fat dairy foods, such as:**

- › Skim, 0.5%, or 1% milk
- › Frozen yogurt or regular yogurt with less than 2% milk fat (M.F.)
- › Low fat cheese with less than 10% M.F.

### **4. Eat smaller portions of meat:**

- Protein foods should only cover one quarter (1/4) of your plate.
- Choose plant-based proteins more often. This includes pulses (legumes, lentils, dried peas, and beans), soy (Texturized vegetable protein [TVP], tofu, tempeh), nuts, and seeds.
- Eat less red meat (like beef, pork, lamb). Do not eat red meat more than 3 times a week.
- Choose lean or extra lean ground meats.
- Trim all the fat you can see meat before cooking.

### **5. Choose poultry (like chicken) and fish more often.**

- Eat fish at least twice a week.
- Do not eat poultry skin.
- Choose fresh or frozen fish.
- Avoid fish with batter or coating.
- Salmon, mackerel (not king mackerel), anchovies, sardines, herring, trout, and tuna are good choices for healthy omega-3 fats.
- For canned fish, choose fish canned in water instead of oil.

- Do not use a lot of sauce.
- 6. Replace meat at least 2 times a week.**
  - Pulses and tofu are great sources of low-fat protein. Split pea soup, meatless chili, lentil soup, and hummus are good options.
- 7. Unsalted nuts and seeds are a healthy protein choice.**
  - Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, soy nuts, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds are all good choices.
- 8. Healthy oils are a better choice than spreadable or hard fats.**
  - Canola oil is good for baking, cooking, and salads.
  - Olive oil is best for sautéing and salads.
    - › Try dipping bread in olive oil instead of using butter or margarine.
  - Use soft tub margarines that say “non-hydrogenated” instead of regular margarine or butter.
  - Add no more than 3 to 6 teaspoons of fat to your food a day.
- 9. Eat less high cholesterol foods, such as:**
  - › Egg yolks (no more than 3 egg yolks a week)
  - › Organ meats (like liver, pâté, kidney, and heart)

## **10. Cool soups, stews, and gravies, and skim off the fat before eating.**

### **Lower your sodium (salt) intake.**

1. Do not use the saltshaker at the table.
2. Eat more fresh foods.
3. Cook your own meals from scratch more often. Convenience foods, restaurant meals, and take-out foods are usually very high in sodium.
4. Eat fewer canned or packaged foods, such as soups, sauces, frozen dinners, potato chips, snack crackers, and pretzels.
5. Limit processed meats (like bacon, ham, and deli meats).
6. Do not eat foods that are smoked, cured, pickled, or salted.
7. Do not use salt in cooking whenever possible. Use only very small amounts of salt, if needed (no more than 1/4 teaspoon a day).
8. Compare different brands of cereals and breads, and choose ones with less sodium.
9. If you use canned foods (like canned tuna, lentils, vegetables), choose ones with no added salt or less sodium, and rinse well before using.

10. Limit condiments like mayonnaise or creamy salad dressings. Try different herbs and spices or other flavourings, such as lemon juice, zest (grated peel) from citrus fruit, or vinegar, to make food taste better.
11. Try salt-free spice blends (like Mrs. Dash™ Salt-free Flavor Full Seasoning Blends or McCormick® Salt Free Seasonings).

## **Eat more fibre.**

1. Eat more vegetables and fruits. Fresh, frozen, or canned without added salt are all good choices.
2. Add more fibre slowly to avoid gas, bloating, or cramping.
3. Eat whole grain breads and cereals more often.
4. Choose fruit instead of juice.
5. Buy fresh vegetables and fruits in season to save money.

## **Tips for eating out**

1. Eat out less often. When eating out, choose healthy menu options.
2. Order smaller portions or share with a friend.
3. You do not need to finish your meal. Pack up half and take it for lunch the next day.

4. Ask for gravies, sauces, or salad dressings on the side and use only a little.
5. Choose lower fat and lower sodium foods.
6. Check the menu for heart healthy cooking methods.

## **Getting started**

1. Change your eating habits slowly over time.
2. Set 1 or 2 goals at a time. Once you reach your goal, set a new one. Examples:
  - › “I will replace my morning muffin with a piece of fruit and a small piece of low-fat cheese.”
  - › “I will eat 2 vegetables at supper each night.”
3. Get support from family and friends.
4. Check out cookbooks or websites for heart healthy recipes. Make a grocery list. Plan your meals ahead of time.
5. Learn how to read food labels.
6. When you do well with your goals, treat yourself, but not with food.

## **Follow Canada's Food Guide healthy eating recommendations when planning your meals:**

### **Eat a variety of healthy foods each day.**

- Eat a lot of vegetables and fruits.
- Eat protein foods.
  - › Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.
- Choose whole grain foods.
  - › Limit processed foods.
- Make water your drink of choice.
  - › Replace sugary drinks with water.

### **Be mindful of your eating habits.**

- Take time to eat.
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full.
- Cook more often.
  - › Plan what you will eat.
  - › Involve others in planning and making meals.
- Enjoy your food.
  - › Culture and food traditions can be a part of healthy eating.
- Eat meals with others.

## Resources

**For more tips on how to follow a heart healthy meal plan:**

- **Canada's Food Guide**
  - › <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en>
- **Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada**
  - › [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)
- **Do an online search for:**
  - › DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet
  - › Mediterranean diet

**For information on using more plant-based proteins:**

- **Better with Beans™** (for recipes using beans)  
Ontario Bean Growers
  - › <https://ontariobeans.on.ca/recipes>

## **For nutrition counselling:**

Do an online search for “Nova Scotia health nutrition counselling” to see what services are available in your community.

## **Nutrition Education and Counselling (Dietitians)**

- Registered dietitians work in some grocery stores. They offer many services, including store tours. Check your local grocery store for help from a registered dietitian. Do an online search for “dietitian and (name of your grocery store)” or visit:
  - › [www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/nutrition-education-and-counselling-dietitians](http://www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/nutrition-education-and-counselling-dietitians)

## **Cookbooks**

- There are many cookbooks to help you add variety to your meals. Any cookbook by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Dietitians of Canada, or Diabetes Canada has good information. You can find these in most libraries and bookstores.
- Other good cookbooks:
  - › *Hold the Salt*, and *Hold that Hidden Salt* by Maureen Tilley, a local dietitian
  - › *Delicious DASH Flavors*, and *Low Salt DASH Dinners*, by Sandra Nowlan

It can be hard to make changes to your eating habits. If you have any questions, please ask to talk with a dietitian. We are here to help you.

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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