

Heart Healthy Eating Guide



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Heart Healthy Eating Guide

What is heart healthy eating?

- Heart healthy eating means eating a mix of nutritious **whole foods** (foods that are not highly processed or refined).
- Nutritious whole foods include:
 - › Fruits and vegetables
 - › Whole grains
 - › Lean proteins (like skinless chicken or Greek yogurt)
 - › Plant-based proteins (like tofu, chickpeas, or soybeans)
- What you eat affects your heart health and your overall health.
- Healthy eating can lower your risk of heart disease by helping to:
 - › Improve your cholesterol levels
 - › Lower your blood pressure
 - › Manage your weight
 - › Control your blood glucose (sugar)

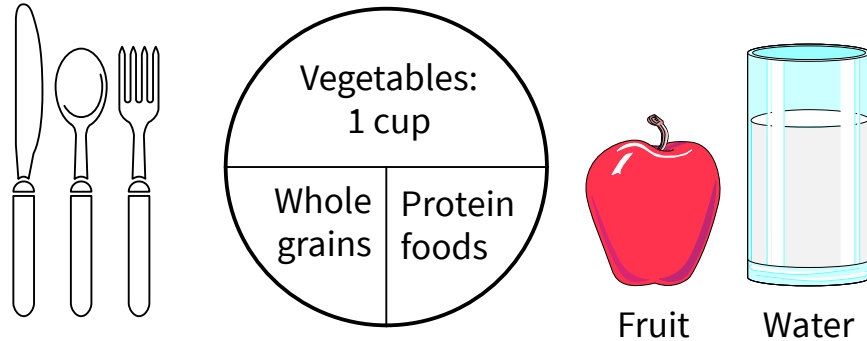
What can I do to eat heart healthy?

- Make meals at home using fresh, whole foods.
 - › Choose whole foods.
 - › Eat fewer processed foods. Processed foods often have added sugar, salt, and fat. They also lose nutrients through processing.

This will help you get the most nutrition.

- Be mindful.
 - › People eat for many reasons other than hunger. Listen to your body and try to only eat when you have a physical need (hunger) for food.
 - › Eat slowly and enjoy your food. Pay attention to the look, smell, and taste of your food while you are eating.
 - › Limit distractions while you are eating. For example, put your phone down or turn off the TV.
 - › If you skip meals, you may need to start eating regular meals to reset your body's hunger cues (knowing when you feel hungry).

- Fill half (½) of your plate with vegetables.
 - › Eating more vegetables lowers blood pressure.
- Choose foods higher in fibre (see page 6 for examples).
- Balance your meals to keep you feeling full longer.
 - › Make sure each meal has a source of protein and a source of fibre.



- Use less sugar, salt, and fat when cooking.
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt when cooking.
 - › Enjoy fruit and vegetables without added sugar or salt.
 - › Drain and rinse canned fruit and vegetables.
 - › Use smaller amounts of condiments (like ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, mayonnaise, butter, and margarine).
- Choose proteins from plants more often. Plant-based proteins have more fibre and less saturated fat than animal-based proteins. Some good choices for plant-based proteins are:
 - › Nuts
 - › Lentils
 - › Seeds
 - › Beans
 - › Peas
 - › Soy products
- Choose fatty fish 2 times a week. Fatty fish are sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Some examples of fatty fish are:
 - › Salmon
 - › Sardines
 - › Mackerel
 - › Trout
- Drink water when you are thirsty. Avoid drinks with added sugars (like pop, juice, sports drinks, chocolate milk, and energy drinks).
- Ask your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about cannabis and alcohol use.
 - › Cannabis can raise your risk of heart disease.
 - › Alcohol can raise your blood pressure, weight, and triglycerides (a type of fat in your blood).

- To learn how to lower the risks from drinking alcohol, see Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health:
 - › www.ccsa.ca/more-6-drinks-week-puts-your-health-risk-new-canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health

Scan the QR code on your device (open the camera on your device, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)



- Ask your primary health care provider about the **Mediterranean diet**.
 - › The Mediterranean diet focuses on plant-based foods with little processing, healthy fats, and enjoying meals with others. This diet has been shown to lower the risk of heart problems.
 - › Make fruit and vegetables the main part of your meals and snacks.
 - › Eat beans, legumes, nuts, and whole grains every day.
 - › Cook with olive or avocado oil instead of butter.
 - › Eat more lean meat. For example, choose fish more often and eat less red meat.
 - › Eat fruit for dessert. Limit sweets and added sugar.
- Ask your dietitian for more information on the Mediterranean diet or visit:
 - › <https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

Other things that can affect your food choices

Sleep

- Research has shown that sleep has a big effect on your health.
- Not getting enough sleep can affect the hormones that control hunger and stimulate (increase) your appetite.
- Try to go to bed and get up at about the same time every day.
- Sleep in a dark, cool room.
- Limit screen time (like a TV or smartphone) for at least 60 minutes (1 hour) before bed.

Stress

- Stress can change how much and how often you eat. It can make you want to skip a meal or not eat at all.
- Stress triggers hormones that can make you feel hungry when you are not. It can cause distracted or emotional eating (using food as a comfort).
- Stress has many other harmful effects on your health. Stress cannot always be lowered or avoided, but you can learn to manage it.

Managing your stress

These resources may help you manage your stress:

- **What's Your Stress Index?**

Canadian Mental Health Association

› <https://cmha.ca/whats-your-stress-index>

- **Mental Health - Coping With Stress**

Government of Canada

› www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/lifestyles/your-health-mental-health-coping-stress-health-canada-2008.html

- **Reduce Stress**

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

› www.heartandstroke.ca/get-healthy/reduce-stress

- **Stress Management**

HelpGuide.org

› www.helpguide.org/home-pages/stress.htm

- **International Stress Management Association of the United Kingdom (ISMAUK)**

› www.isma.org.uk

- **Stress**

Nova Scotia Health's Community Health Teams

› <https://library.nshealth.ca/CommunityHealthTeams/MentalWellness#s-lg-box-16624211>

- **Physical Activity**

Nova Scotia Health's Community Health Teams

› <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation/PhysicalActivity>

Sodium (salt)

- Salt is the main source of sodium in our food.
- Eating too much sodium can raise your blood pressure, and your risk of stroke and kidney disease.
- Try to limit sodium to no more than 2000 mg a day.
 - › 1 tsp of salt has 2300 mg of sodium.
- Sea salt, kosher salt, and pink Himalayan salt all have the same amount of sodium as table salt.

Tips to help limit salt

- Make your meals at home from whole, natural foods.
- Buy unprocessed fresh and frozen foods, when you can.
- Replace salt with herbs and spices when cooking.
- Choose whole vegetables instead of vegetable juices (like V8® Original 100% Vegetable Juice, carrot juice, or tomato juice).
- **Do not** keep a salt shaker on the dining or kitchen table.
- Check food labels for sodium (see page 11 for information on how to read a food label).
- Choose “no salt added” canned products instead of products labelled “low sodium” or “reduced sodium”.
 - › Foods with labels that say “low sodium” and “reduced sodium” may still have too much sodium. It is best to always check the label.
- Drain and rinse salted, canned products.

Fibre

- Fibre is **only** found in plant-based foods. There are 2 types of fibre:
 - › Soluble fibre
 - › Insoluble fibre
- It is important to eat a mix of plant-based foods to get both types of fibre.

Soluble fibre

- Soluble fibre:
 - › Lowers cholesterol levels
 - › Helps control blood sugar levels
 - › Helps manage diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- Sources of soluble fibre:
 - › Pulses (like beans, lentils, and chickpeas)
 - › Oats
 - › Psyllium
 - › Ground flaxseed and chia seeds
 - › Some fruits (like berries and applesauce)

Insoluble fibre

- Insoluble fibre:
 - › Helps you feel full
 - › Helps keep your bowel movements (poops) regular
- Insoluble fibre is also called **roughage**.
- Sources of insoluble fibre:
 - › Fruit and vegetables (especially skins and seeds)
 - › Whole grains
 - › Bran (wheat and oat)
 - › Nuts and seeds

Tips to help you eat more fibre

- Eat more whole fruit and vegetables.
- Choose whole fruit instead of fruit juice.
- Choose higher fibre cereals, like oatmeal or shredded wheat, more often.
- Add beans, lentils, and chickpeas to homemade soups and casseroles.
- Read food labels to check the fibre content. Choose foods with higher amounts (at least 5% DV a serving) of fibre.

- Choose whole grains more often instead of refined (white) options.
 - › To check if something is made with whole grains, read the label. The first ingredient in the ingredient list should have the words “whole grain” followed by the type of grain.
- Add 1 to 2 Tbsp of any of these foods to your cereal or yogurt:
 - › Wheat bran
 - › Oat bran
 - › Psyllium
 - › Chia seeds
 - › Ground flaxseed
- Add nuts and seeds to salads and cereals.
- Eat more fibre a little bit at a time, over time. This will help to prevent gas, bloating, or cramping.
- Drink lots of water. Try to drink 2 L of water every day.

Fruit and vegetables

- Eating fruit and vegetables can lower your risk of many diseases, including heart disease and cancer.
- Fruit and vegetables give your body the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre that it needs for good health.
- Including fruit and/or vegetables at every meal and snack will help you get the amount you need each day.

Tips to help you eat more fruit and vegetables

- Include more whole fruit and vegetables instead of juices.
- Choose fruit and vegetables prepared with little or no fat, sugar, or salt.
- Try to fill half (½) your plate with vegetables at each meal.
 - › Choose lots of different coloured vegetables.
 - › Choose orange and dark green vegetables often (like carrots, broccoli, kale, and squash).
 - › Choose more vegetables than fruit throughout the day.

Sugar

- Sugar gives your body energy.
- Sugar is naturally found in some food and drinks (like lactose in milk and fructose in fruit). It may also be added to food and drinks (like sucrose in cookies and high fructose corn syrup in pop).
- Added sugars include:
 - › Sugar, honey, and molasses added to food and drinks
 - › Fruit juice
- You get enough natural sugar from your food. Having too much added sugar can be harmful to your health. Eating too much added sugar is linked to:
 - › Heart disease
 - › High cholesterol
 - › Stroke
 - › Cancer
 - › Obesity (being overweight)
 - › Tooth cavities
- The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests limiting added sugar to 6 tsp a day or less (**1 tsp of sugar is equal to 4 grams**).

Tips to help you eat less sugar

- Eat whole foods.
- Check food labels for added sugar (see “How to read a food label” on page 11).
- Drink **water** instead of sweetened drinks (like pop, juice, sports drinks, chocolate milk, and energy drinks).

Fat

- Our bodies need fat to help absorb (take in) vitamins, but fat is also high in calories. Choosing whole, natural foods is the best way to avoid eating too much fat.

Best fat choices	Where is it found?
Unsaturated <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comes from plant-based sources and fish• Good for your heart and blood vessels• Liquid at room temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nuts and seeds• Avocados• Fish• Oils (olive, canola, avocado)
Omega-3 fatty acids <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type of unsaturated fat• Essential (needed) fat that your body cannot make• Linked with a lower risk of heart disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fatty fish (salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines, herring)• Oils (canola, soy, flax)• Nuts and seeds (walnuts, ground flaxseeds, chia seeds)• Omega-3 eggs• Legumes (soybeans and soy products)

Fat choices to limit or avoid	Where is it found?
<p>Saturated (limit)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonly found in processed and fried foods • Also found in animal products and some plant-based oils • Can raise bad (LDL or low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol • Solid at room temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processed meats (salami, bologna, hot dogs, sausages, pepperoni) • Full fat dairy products (cream, butter, whole milk) • Oils (coconut, palm) • High fat meats (lard, meat with fat, poultry with skin)
<p>Trans (avoid)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made through a process called hydrogenation. It is not found naturally in foods. • Used in processed foods to make them last longer • Bad for heart health • Solid at room temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortening • Hard, block margarine • Store-bought baked goods (doughnuts, cookies, cakes, muffins, crackers) • Fast food • Any food that has the words hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated in the ingredient list

How to read a food label

Serving size

- The amount of nutrients listed is based on the product's serving size. Compare this amount to the amount you eat.
- It is not always best to eat the amount of food in the serving size on the label.
- When comparing similar foods, look for the same serving size.

% Daily Value (DV)

- The DV tells you if there is a little or a lot of a nutrient in 1 serving.
 - > 5% or less is a little.
 - > 15% or more is a lot.

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (228 g) / par 1 tasse (228 g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Portions par contenant 2	
Amount	%Daily Value
Teneur	%valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 250	
Fat / Lipides 12 g	18 %
Saturated / saturés 3 g	
+ Trans / trans 3 g	30 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 30 mg	10 %
Sodium / Sodium 470 mg	20 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 31 g	10 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 5 g	
Protein / Protéines 5 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	4 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	2 %
Calcium / Calcium	20 %
Iron / Fer	4 %

Fat

- Look at the total amount of fat.
- The total fat content includes unsaturated, saturated, and trans fats. Try to use and eat products with no trans fat. Trans fat is not healthy and should be avoided.

Sodium

- Avoid high sodium foods (15% DV or more). Look for lower sodium foods (5% DV or less).

Fibre

- Choose foods with at least 5% DV for fibre a serving.

Sugar

- Look for lower amounts, including natural and added sugar.
- Check the ingredient list for added sugar. Look for words that mean sugar, like:
 - › Sugar
 - › Dextrose
 - › Fructose
 - › Glucose
 - › Syrup
 - › Maltose
 - › Sucrose
 - › Fruit juice concentrate
 - › Maltodextrin
 - › Honey
 - › Molasses
- Remember that **1 tsp of sugar** is equal to **4 grams**.

What should I look for on the ingredient list?

- Ingredients are listed by weight. This means that foods have more of the ingredients that are at the start of the list and less of the ingredients at the end of the list.
- Fat, sodium, and sugar may be in the ingredient list under different names.
- The ingredient list can also help you check for and avoid certain ingredients if you have an allergy or intolerance.
- To learn more about reading an ingredient list, visit:

Nutrition labelling: List of ingredients

Government of Canada

- › www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels/ingredient-list.html

Remember: the words **hydrogenated** and **partially hydrogenated** mean that there are trans fats in the food.

More information

These websites have recipes, resources, and information about food and nutrition.

Cookspiration®

- Recipe ideas
 - › www.cookspiration.com

Diabetes Canada

- Information about diabetes, resources, webinars, and recipes
 - › www.diabetes.ca

Dietitians of Canada

- Information about nutrition, how to find a dietitian, and recipes
 - › www.dietitians.ca

UnlockFood.ca™

- Information about nutrition and how to find a dietitian
 - › www.unlockfood.ca

Health Canada

- Information about nutrition
 - › www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html

Healthy living resources - Government of Alberta

- Recipes and information about nutrition and health
 - › www.alberta.ca/healthy-living-resources.aspx

HealthLinkBC - Province of British Columbia

- Information about nutrition
 - › www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- Information about heart disease and heart healthy recipes
 - › www.heartandstroke.com

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.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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