

# Heart Healthy, Sodium Restricted Guidelines: 1500 to 2000 mg sodium per day

# Heart Healthy, Sodium Restricted Guidelines: 1500 to 2000 mg sodium per day

## Why eat heart healthy?

- Heart healthy eating can help you feel good and give you energy.
- Eating more fibre and less fat can lower your risk of heart disease by helping control:
  - › your weight.
  - › your blood pressure.
  - › your cholesterol.
  - › diabetes.
- Eating less sodium (salt) can help manage heart failure and high blood pressure.

## How do I eat heart healthy?

- Follow Canada's Food Guide to help with your food choices and eating habits. Try to eat balanced meals and choose a variety of foods from each food group every day.
  - › <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en>

Have plenty  
of vegetables  
and fruits

Eat protein  
foods

Make water  
your drink  
of choice



Choose  
whole grain  
foods

- Limit sugars, candy, and desserts.
- Limit caffeine.
- Talk to your primary health care provider about alcohol.
- Keep a healthy body weight with regular physical activity and healthy eating.
- Ask your health care provider or dietitian 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 disease.

## Reading food labels

- Read food labels carefully for sodium, fat, and fibre content. Be sure to also look for the serving size.
- Most labels show the mg (milligrams) of sodium, and g (grams) of fat and fibre, plus a % DV (percent daily value) of each. Compare different products and choose those with less sodium and fat, and more fibre. Avoid foods with a % DV of more than 10% for sodium, and 15% for total fat.

## Fat free or low fat

- “Cholesterol-free” does not mean fat free or low in fat. For example, “cholesterol-free” french fries never had any cholesterol in the first place, but they have plenty of fat.
- “Light” does not always mean low in fat or calories. It may mean the food is light in colour, flavour, or texture. Read the label closely to see why it is called “light”.
- Check the ingredient list to make sure there are no hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats.
- Choose foods with less than 5% DV of total fat (including saturated fat).
- Choose foods with 0 grams trans fats **and** no hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats.

## Fibre

Look for foods with more than 15% DV of fibre, or more than 3 grams of fiber per serving.

## Low sodium

- “Less salt” does not always mean something is low in salt.
- Look for foods labeled “salt-free”, “no added salt/sodium”, or “low sodium”.
- Choose foods with a % DV of sodium of less than 5%, or less than 120 mg sodium per serving.

### Example of a high sodium food to avoid

#### Sample label for macaroni and cheese

1. Check serving size and calories.

2. Limit fats and watch out for high sodium.

3. Get enough of these nutrients and vitamins.

4. Pay attention to the details in the footnotes.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)			
Servings Per Container 2			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 250		Calories from Fat 110	
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat	12g	18%	
Saturated Fat	3g	15%	
Trans Fat	1.5g		
Cholesterol	30mg	10%	
Sodium	470mg	20%	
Total Carbohydrate	31g	10%	
Dietary Fiber	0g	0%	
Sugars	5g		
Protein	5g		
Vitamin A		4%	
Vitamin C		2%	
Calcium		20%	
Iron		4%	
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Choose more of the foods from the “Best choices” list and less from the foods to “Avoid” list. Then you will be eating heart healthy!

## Vegetables and fruit

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. They make a great low fat snack. Limit processed vegetables and fruits, like juices and convenience foods.

Best choices	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh vegetables</li> <li>• Frozen vegetables without seasoning or sauces</li> <li>• Vegetables canned without salt</li> <li>• No salt added tomato sauce, paste, and canned tomatoes (like Hunt’s® No Salt Added Tomato Sauce)</li> <li>• Low sodium vegetable juices</li> <li>• Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit</li> <li>• Unsweetened fruit juice, no more than 1/2 cup (125 ml)</li> <li>• Dried fruit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canned vegetables with added salt</li> <li>• Frozen vegetables in sauces</li> <li>• Pickles</li> <li>• Canned or bottled pasta and pizza sauces</li> <li>• Vegetable juices with salt (like tomato, Clamato®, V8®)</li> <li>• Dried potato mixes, like scalloped or mashed</li> <li>• French fries or fried potatoes</li> <li>• Vegetables with cheese or cream sauces</li> <li>• Vegetables seasoned with salt</li> <li>• Canned or dried fruit with added sodium</li> <li>• Fermented vegetables, like sauerkraut and kimchi</li> <li>• Seaweed</li> </ul>

## Grain products

- For breads and cereals, choose whole grain more often than white or refined. Whole grain products have more fibre. Fibre:
  - › keeps you full.
  - › helps lower cholesterol levels.
  - › helps control blood sugar levels if you are diabetic.
- The first ingredient on the ingredient list should have the words “Whole grain” followed by the name of the grain.
- **Look for breads, cereals, and crackers with less than 8% DV of sodium.**
- Watch for sodium, hidden fats, and trans fats in bakery or grocery store items (like muffins, biscuits, croissants, cookies, crackers, and “ready to eat” meals).

Best choices	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yeast breads, pita bread, bagels — Choose whole grain products more often.</li> <li>• Homemade muffins, waffles, pancakes, and biscuits without added salt and using heart healthy fats — Be careful how many you have if you are trying to lose weight.</li> <li>• Plain, unsalted crackers</li> <li>• Dry cereals made without salt (like Post® Shredded Wheat Original, puffed wheat, Kellogg’s® Mini-Wheats®)</li> <li>• Cooked cereals made without salt</li> <li>• Pasta (like macaroni or spaghetti) — Try whole wheat pasta.</li> <li>• Rice — Try brown or wild rice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheese bread, egg bread</li> <li>• Store-bought baking mixes (like pancake and biscuit mixes)</li> <li>• Pre-seasoned pasta mixes (like Hamburger Helper™, Kraft® Dinner, Knorr® Sidekicks®)</li> <li>• Canned spaghetti or pasta</li> <li>• Instant hot cereals</li> <li>• Bread stuffing mixes</li> <li>• Seasoned crumb coating (like Kraft® Shake ‘n Bake)</li> <li>• Store-bought baked products</li> <li>• Salted crackers</li> <li>• Pre-seasoned rice</li> <li>• Mr. Noodles and other instant soups</li> </ul>

## Protein foods: Milk and alternatives

- Choose unsweetened, lower fat, lower sodium dairy products.
- Use only small amounts of non-hydrogenated margarine. Salt-free is best.
- Use vegetable oil instead of solid fats (butter, margarine), if possible.
- Choose drinks with no more than 5% DV of sodium, fat, and saturated fat.

Best choices	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk (skim, 0.5%, or 1%)</li> <li>• Fortified, unsweetened, low fat soy, rice, or almond beverages</li> <li>• Yogurt (less than 1.4% milk fat [MF])</li> <li>• Cheese:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Light cream cheese</li> <li>› Low fat cheeses with up to 10% DV of sodium. Limit intake to 30 g (1 oz) a day.</li> <li>› Unsalted, low fat cottage cheese</li> <li>› Low fat bocconcini</li> <li>› Reduced fat ricotta</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evaporated skim milk</li> <li>• Frozen yogurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full fat dairy products (cream, butter, whole milk)</li> <li>• Processed cheese spreads (like Kraft® Cheez Whiz)</li> <li>• Processed cheese slices</li> <li>• Blue, feta, Romano, and Parmesan cheeses</li> <li>• Chocolate milk and other flavoured milks</li> <li>• Malted milk</li> <li>• Buttermilk</li> <li>• Milkshakes</li> <li>• Cottage cheese</li> <li>• Ready-made and instant milk puddings</li> <li>• Condensed milk with more than 2% MF</li> <li>• Hot chocolate mixes</li> <li>• Eggnog</li> <li>• Ice cream</li> </ul>

## Protein foods: Meat and plant-based proteins

- Choose plant-based proteins more often. Choose lean cuts of meat and use low fat cooking methods (like baking, barbecuing, broiling, or roasting).

Best choices	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have fresh or frozen fish (especially salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout, or herring) 2 to 3 times a week</li> <li>• Plain, fresh, or frozen:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Chicken or turkey (white meat)</li> <li>› Lean beef, pork, lamb</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Canned tuna or salmon packed in water — Rinse before eating.</li> <li>• Eggs — Limit to 2 to 3 egg yolks a week.</li> <li>• Egg whites</li> <li>• Unsalted, dry roasted nuts and seeds (like almonds, peanuts, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds)</li> <li>• Dried or frozen unseasoned pulses (dried beans, chickpeas, dried peas, lentils)</li> <li>• No added salt canned chickpeas and beans</li> <li>• Natural peanut and other nut butters (unsalted and unsweetened)</li> <li>• Frozen entrees with less than 10% DV of sodium and less than 15% DV of fat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All meat, fish, and poultry that has been smoked, cured, pickled, salted, or dried, like:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Bacon, bologna, corned beef, ham, kosher meats, luncheon meats, sausage, wieners, sardines, salt cod, smoked herring</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Canned meats</li> <li>• Frozen dinners</li> <li>• Frozen meat pies</li> <li>• Frozen, breaded fish or chicken</li> <li>• Canned beans</li> <li>• Canned stews</li> <li>• Salted seeds and nuts</li> <li>• Regular peanut and other nut butters</li> <li>• Pizza</li> <li>• Chinese food</li> </ul>



## Fats

Have no more than 2 to 3 tbsp (30 to 45 ml) of added fat a day.

<b>Best choices</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soft salt-free, non-hydrogenated margarine (like Becel™ Salt Free)</li><li>• Canola oil, olive oil</li><li>• Salt-free salad dressing (see recipe on page 14)</li><li>• Low sodium mayonnaise</li><li>• Salt-free, low fat homemade gravy</li><li>• Vegetable oil cooking sprays</li><li>• Avocadoes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Butter</li><li>• Lard</li><li>• Bacon fat and salt pork</li><li>• Shortening and hard margarines — These are hydrogenated.</li><li>• Cocoa butter</li><li>• Palm and coconut oils (both regular and hydrogenated)</li><li>• Most store-bought salad dressings (check the ingredient list)</li><li>• Store-bought dips</li><li>• Canned gravy and gravy mixes</li></ul>

## Soups

<b>Best choices</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unsalted soup and broth</li><li>• Canned soups with 10% or less DV of sodium</li><li>• Homemade soup with no added salt</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular canned soups</li><li>• Dried soup mixes, Oxo®, bouillon, and consommé</li><li>• Split pea soup made with ham bone</li><li>• Bean and bacon soup</li></ul>

## Other foods

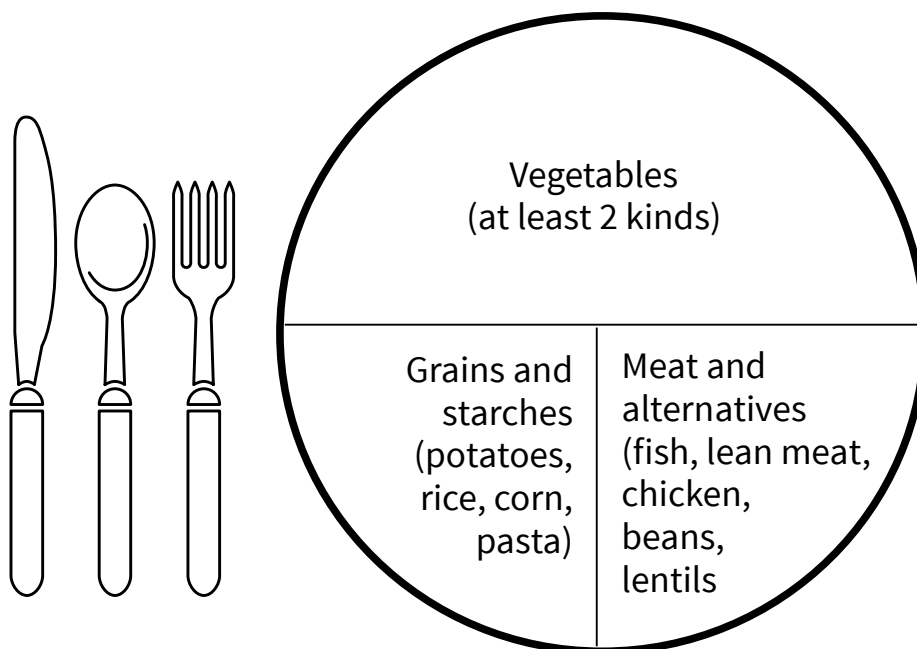
Best choices	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water and mineral water</li> <li>• Diet pop</li> <li>• Sherbet</li> <li>• Postum<sup>®</sup>, Ovaltine<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Coffee, tea</li> <li>• Ground flaxseed</li> <li>• Low sugar jams and jellies (like E. D. Smith<sup>®</sup> Triple Fruits<sup>®</sup> or Smucker's<sup>®</sup> Double Fruit<sup>®</sup>)</li> <li>• Herbs</li> <li>• Spices without salt</li> <li>• Salt-free seasoning blends (like Dash<sup>™</sup>, McCormick<sup>®</sup> or PC<sup>®</sup> Blue Menu<sup>™</sup> No Salt Added Seasoning Blends)</li> <li>• Vinegar</li> <li>• Tabasco<sup>®</sup> sauce</li> <li>• Unsalted, air-popped popcorn</li> <li>• Cream of tartar</li> <li>• Cocoa</li> <li>• Baking powder and baking soda in small amounts</li> <li>• No more than 1 tsp (5 ml) a day (total) with less than 5% DV of sodium of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Worcestershire sauce</li> <li>› Ketchup</li> <li>› Relish</li> <li>› Mustard</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water treated with a salt-based water softener</li> <li>• Sports drinks (like Gatorade<sup>®</sup>)</li> <li>• Regular pop</li> <li>• Sugar, honey, corn syrup, maple syrup, molasses, regular jams and jellies</li> <li>• Salt, sea salt, artisan salts, Ac'cent<sup>®</sup> Flavor Enhancer</li> <li>• Celery salt</li> <li>• Garlic salt</li> <li>• Onion salt</li> <li>• Seasoning blends that contain salt or sodium</li> <li>• Pickles</li> <li>• Olives</li> <li>• Soy sauce, light soy sauce</li> <li>• Hoisin, teriyaki, and oyster sauces</li> <li>• Salsa, picante, and taco sauces</li> <li>• Poultry and meat coatings</li> <li>• Potato and nacho chips</li> <li>• Hawkins Cheezies<sup>®</sup> and pretzels</li> <li>• Salted popcorn, microwave popcorn</li> <li>• Party snacks</li> </ul>

## Fluid

- You may need to limit how much fluid you drink each day if you have heart failure or have been told you are on a fluid restriction. Your primary health care provider will tell you how much fluid you should have each day.
- Keep track of the amount of fluids you drink, including water, milk, juice, pop, coffee, tea, and alcohol. You must also keep track of any foods that would be liquid at room temperature (like ice cubes, popsicles, ice cream, sherbet, soups, or Jell-O®).
- For more information, ask your dietitian for a copy of the pamphlet “Managing Fluid Intake”.
  - › [www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/0127.pdf](http://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/0127.pdf)

## Portion size matters

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. They are low in calories and fat, and high in fibre. Half of your plate should be filled with vegetables and fruit, 1/4 with grains and the rest with protein foods.



## Cooking and baking

You can make your own recipes heart healthy with a few changes:

- Do not use salt in your baking, or in soup, sauce, gravy, or casserole recipes.
- Cut back on the amount of salt in yeast bread recipes. To improve results, keep your dough more dry than usual and shorten your proofing time.
- Use non-hydrogenated margarine instead of butter, shortening, or lard.
- If a recipe calls for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup of fat, use only  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a cup.
- Pick recipes that use vegetable or canola oil instead of butter, margarine, lard, palm oil, coconut oil, or shortening.
- For muffin recipes that need more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of oil, use fruit juice, pureed fruit, or low-fat yogurt to replace half of the oil.
- Refrigerate juice from roast meats and poultry until the fat rises to the top. Then skim the fat off before making gravy.
- Saute with water, juice, low sodium broth, or wine instead of fats, or use vegetable oil cooking sprays.
- Use less meat, eggs, or cheese than suggested in a recipe.

## What about omega-3 fatty acids?

- Omega-3 fatty acids are fats that our bodies need to stay healthy. They can help lower the risk of heart disease. The best way to get them is from eating fish.
- You should have 1 g of omega-3 fatty acids **from food** daily. To do this, have 5 to 6 oz of fresh or frozen fish at least 2 times a week. Salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring, or trout (not deep fried, smoked, or salted) is best.
- Some foods are fortified with (have added) omega-3s (like eggs, milk, yogurt, margarine, and some juices).
- **The best way to get omega-3 fatty acids is from food, but supplements are available.** If you think you are not getting enough omega-3s, talk with your dietitian, health care provider, or pharmacist before taking an omega-3 supplement.
- **If you are on a blood thinner (like warfarin), talk with your primary health care provider before taking an omega-3 supplement.**

## What about flaxseed?

Ground flax seeds are very high in fibre and are a source of ALA omega-3 fatty acids. Flax seeds must be ground to make the omega-3 fatty acids useful to your body. Your body cannot use them as whole seeds.

### Ways to use flax

- Sprinkle ground flaxseed on hot or cold cereal, yogurt, or applesauce.
- Add ground flaxseed to hamburgers, soups, or casseroles.
- Replace 1 tbsp of fat in a recipe with 3 tbsp of ground flaxseed.
- Replace 1 egg with a mixture of 1 tbsp of ground flaxseed **plus** 3 tbsp of water.
- Add ground flaxseed to muffin, bread, or loaf recipes.
- Flax oil cannot be used in cooking, but can be used in salad dressings or added to drinks.

### Storing flax

- Whole flax can be stored at room temperature in a clean, dry place for up to 1 year.
- Flaxseed should be ground as needed and stored in an airtight container that you cannot see through. Keep it in the fridge or freezer for up to 30 days (1 month).
- Keep flax oil in the fridge.

## Eating out

Restaurant foods are often very high in fat and salt. Limit how often you eat out and choose wisely when you do. Some bigger chain restaurants have nutritional information posted on their website. Consider checking this information before going to help you make an informed choice.

- Choose a restaurant that cooks food in many ways, not just fried.
- Ask how foods are cooked. “Crispy” often means deep-fried. Pan-fried or sauteed means cooked in fat.
- Ask for sauces on the side and just use a little, or leave them out altogether. Sauces such as béchamel, béarnaise, and hollandaise have a lot of fat.
- Ask if foods can be prepared without added salt. Avoid meals that contain high fat and high salt ingredients (like bacon, sausage, and cheese). Pickled, cured, or smoked meats are also high in salt.

- Watch out for salads. Caesar salad and “salad” items at a salad bar (chicken salad, potato salad, pasta salad, etc.) are high in fat and salt. If you are adding chicken or seafood to a salad, make sure it is grilled instead of deep-fried. Ask for light salad dressing on the side and use small amounts.
- Trim the fat off meats and remove the skin from chicken.
- For sandwiches or subs, order:
  - › a whole wheat bread or bun
  - › the smallest size, not the foot-long
  - › plain sliced chicken, turkey, or beef
  - › no cheese
  - › lots of vegetables
  - › a small amount of light dressing
  - › no added salt or seasoning

## Resources

For more tips on how to follow a low sodium, low fat, high fibre diet:

### Health Canada

- › [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html)

### Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- › [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

- There are many cookbooks to help you add variety to your meals. You can find these in most libraries and bookstores.
  - › Any cookbook by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Diabetes Canada, or Dietitians of Canada has very good information.

### For nutrition counselling:

- Do an internet search for: “ns health nutrition counselling” to see what services are available in your community.
  - › [www.nshealth.ca/service-details/Nutrition%20Education%20and%20Counselling%20\(Dietitians\)](http://www.nshealth.ca/service-details/Nutrition%20Education%20and%20Counselling%20(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 internet search for: “dietitian and (name of your grocery store)”.

## Recipes

### Balsamic Vinaigrette

- › 1/3 cup (80 ml) onion, chopped
- › 3 garlic cloves, minced
- › 1/4 tsp (1 ml) pepper
- › 3/4 cup (190 ml) balsamic vinegar
- › 1/2 cup (125 ml) olive oil
- › 2 tbsp (30 ml) honey or maple syrup
- › 2 tsp (10 ml) dry mustard **OR**  
2 tbsp (30 ml) Dijon mustard

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir.

### Per 2 tbsp serving:

Calories: 110

Sodium: 60 mg

Total fat: 10 g

Carbohydrates: 6 g

Saturated fat: 1 g

Protein: 0 g

### Salt-free Seasoning Blend

- › 2 tbsp (30 ml) onion powder
- › 2 tsp (10 ml) garlic powder
- › 2 tsp (10 ml) paprika
- › 2 tsp (10 ml) dry mustard
- › 1 tsp (5 ml) thyme, crushed
- › 1/2 tsp (2 ml) pepper
- › 1/4 tsp (1 ml) dried parsley

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir.
- Use as desired.

Makes: about 1/3 cup (68 ml)

## Speedy Barbecue Sauce

- › 1 cup (250 ml) cider vinegar
  - › 3/4 cup (175 ml) no salt added canned crushed tomatoes
  - › 3 tbsp (45 ml) packed brown sugar
  - › 1 tbsp (15 ml) Worcestershire sauce
  - › 2 tsp (10 ml) hot pepper sauce
  - › 2 tbsp (30 ml) chopped garlic
- Add ingredients to a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
  - Lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring often.
  - Remove from heat and cool slightly before using.

Makes: 1½ cups

### Per 2 tbsp serving:

Calories: 20

Sodium: 40 mg

Total fat: 0 g

Carbohydrates: 6 g

Saturated fat: 0 g

Protein: 0 g

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

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

**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.**







**Looking for more health information?**

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.*

*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by: Nutrition and Food Services*

*Illustration by: Health Canada*

*Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*

The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.

The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.