

# HEART HEALTHFUL EATING

## Healthnews



The foods you eat can help keep your heart healthy and reduce your risk for heart disease. Use this guide to help you develop a heart healthful eating plan for yourself and your family.

### What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body uses to make things you need, such as cell walls and hormones. Your cholesterol levels are directly affected by two factors:

1. how much cholesterol your body makes; this is influenced by your genes, and
2. the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in the foods you eat

Your liver makes more cholesterol if your diet is high in cholesterol and fat, especially saturated fat. Excess cholesterol builds up on the walls of the arteries that carry blood to the heart. This may slow or block blood flow to the heart.

Having high blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease. The higher your blood cholesterol levels, the greater your risk. If you are over the age of 20, have your cholesterol levels and the different components checked at least every five years.

### Know your blood cholesterol levels

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	High
LDL Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal for people with heart disease or diabetes
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal/above optimal for everyone
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160 mg/dL and above	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very high
HDL Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 40 mg/dL	Low
60 mg/dL and above	Optimal (High)
Triglycerides	Category
Less than 150 mg/dL	Normal
150-199 mg/dL	Borderline high
200 mg/dL and above	High
500 mg/dL and above	Very high

Source: ATP III, National Cholesterol Education Program, National Institutes of Health, May 2001

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## Good vs. bad cholesterol

Cholesterol is carried through the body attached to protein “packages” known as lipoproteins. The low-density lipoproteins (LDL) are considered bad, because they deposit cholesterol in the artery walls and can cause plaque to build. You want your LDL cholesterol to be as low as possible. The high-density lipoproteins (HDL) are considered good or healthy, because they remove cholesterol from the blood and plaque. Since HDL cholesterol protects against heart disease, higher numbers are better.

## Triglycerides

Triglycerides are the most common form of fat in the diet and body. The two types of fat are saturated and unsaturated. High triglyceride fat levels in your body may increase your risk for heart disease and can contribute to the clogging of arteries in the heart.

## What is a heart healthful eating plan?

A heart healthful diet is based on a variety of fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods. It also includes legumes, nuts, whole grains, poultry, fish, and lean meats. If your diet is made up mostly of these types of foods along with reducing your portion sizes, you reduce your intake of saturated fat and cholesterol.

## Fat and cholesterol intake

Total fat intake should be 25-35 percent of your daily total calories. No more than 7 percent of these calories should be from saturated fat.

- Saturated fats are most often solid at room temperature. They are found mainly in animal foods such as meat, poultry skin, and whole milk products. Coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils, as well as cocoa butter (chocolate), contain saturated fat. Hydrogenated vegetable oil (trans fatty acids found in margarine and shortening) is a saturated fat used in packaged baked goods, like cakes, cookies, and crackers. **Eating too many saturated fats is the main cause for high blood cholesterol.** See the chart on the top to determine your upper limit on fat for the calories you consume.

Total Calories per Day	Saturated Fat in Grams	Total Fat in Grams
1,600	18 or less	53
2,000*	20 or less	65
2,200	24 or less	73
2,500*	25 or less	80
2,800	31 or less	93

\*Percent Daily Values on Nutrition Facts Labels are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Values for 2,000 and 2,500 calories are rounded to the nearest 5 grams to be consistent with the Nutrition Facts Label.

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, USDA, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Fifth edition, 2000.

- Polyunsaturated fats are most often liquid at room temperature. They are found in vegetable oils. Safflower, corn, soybean, and cottonseed oils contain the greatest amounts of polyunsaturated fat. Daily intake is up to 10 percent of your total calories. **Note:** The fat in fatty fish, such as salmon and mackerel, is high in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids. This may be useful in lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. Try to eat fish two to three times per week.
- Monounsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature. They are found in olive and canola oil. Most nuts are rich in monounsaturated fats. Daily intake is up to 20 percent of your total calories.
- Trans fatty acids are made when unsaturated fats become harder and more stable by a process called hydrogenation. Hydrogenated fats are in margarines, shortening, crackers, baked products, peanut butter, and fast foods. Eating too many trans fatty acids can raise blood cholesterol levels, LDL cholesterol, and lower HDL (good) cholesterol.
- Dietary cholesterol is found only in animal products. High amounts are found in egg yolks, organ meats, shrimp, and squid. Limit your cholesterol intake to no more than 300 mg per day.

## Sodium intake

Limit your sodium intake to less than 2,400 milligrams a day. That includes all sodium used in cooking and at the table (salt). Large amounts of sodium can be found in processed and restaurant foods. If you have high blood pressure or heart failure, you may be advised to eat even less sodium for more benefits. Tip: Limit foods with more than 400 mg in a serving.

## Shopping and cooking the heart healthful way

Food Group	Buying	Preparing
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lean cuts of meat, fish, poultry (skinless), and ground beef</li> <li>• Fish and poultry are lower in saturated fat</li> <li>• Fresh ground turkey and chicken are alternatives to ground beef</li> <li>• Canned fish packed in water</li> <li>• Egg substitutes or egg whites</li> <li>• Luncheon meats which are 95 percent or greater fat free</li> <li>• Tofu and beans for vegetable protein</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trim visible fat from meats and remove skin from poultry.</li> <li>• Meats should be baked, broiled, roasted, or grilled.</li> <li>• Limit meat intake to no more than five ounces per day (a 3-ounce portion is about the size of a deck of cards).</li> <li>• Substitute lean ham or Canadian bacon for sausage, bacon, and fatty luncheon meats.</li> <li>• Limit egg yolks to twice per week.</li> </ul>
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fat free, 1 percent milk, or lite soy milk</li> <li>• Low fat or fat free cheeses and cottage cheese</li> <li>• Low fat or fat free yogurt</li> <li>• Low fat or fat free sour cream and cream cheese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use low fat or fat free grated cheeses in recipes.</li> <li>• Evaporated skim milk can be used in sauce, gravies, and casseroles in place of whole milk or cream.</li> </ul>
Fruits and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or frozen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Season steamed vegetables with herbs, spices or lemon juice in place of sauces and butter.</li> </ul>
Breads, cereals, pasta, and other grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-grain breads and cereals</li> <li>• Oats</li> <li>• Rice, pasta, dried beans, and peas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meatless dishes can be prepared from pasta, rice or dried bean and peas.</li> <li>• Add pasta or rice to soup or serve with a low fat sauce as a main dish.</li> <li>• Prepare meatless meals using rice, pasta, soy products, or dried beans and peas.</li> </ul>
Fats and oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olive or canola oils are preferred but other suitable oils are corn, safflower, sesame, soybean, and sunflower</li> <li>• Tub type margarine</li> <li>• Low fat or fat free mayonnaise and salad dressing</li> <li>• Low fat margarines and spreads fortified with up to 3 grams of plant sterols and stanols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use margarine and oils sparingly in cooking.</li> <li>• Herbs and spices may be used in place of butter, cream, sauces, and gravies.</li> </ul>
Sweets, candies, and snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low fat or fat free baked products</li> <li>• Low fat or fat free ice creams and frozen yogurts</li> <li>• Gelatin desserts</li> <li>• Low fat pretzels or plain popcorn for air-popping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use low fat baking recipes, angel food cake, or fruit desserts.</li> <li>• Snack options include pretzels, air-popped popcorn, fruits, and vegetables.</li> </ul>

## Using food labels

Read nutrition labels for the amount of saturated fat, total fat, cholesterol, and total calories in one serving. Remember to check the serving size and number of servings per container. Use this information to compare with other products. If there is no Nutrition Facts label, look for the list of ingredients. The ingredient in the greatest amount is shown first and the ingredient in the least amount is shown last. Choose foods that list fats or oil last. Note: Even though a food may be advertised as reduced fat or sodium, it still may not be low when you look at the serving size.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	6%
Trans Fat 1.5g	3%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	6%
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	10%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	6%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	10%
<b>Protein</b> 5g	10%
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

## Food label claims

### Fat

- Fat free: Less than ½ gram fat per serving.
- Low fat: 3 grams total fat or less per serving.  
Tip: For a meal or main dish try to limit fat to 15 grams.
- Low saturated fat: 1 gram saturated fat or less per serving.

### Cholesterol

- Low cholesterol: 20 mg cholesterol or less per serving.

### Sodium

- Sodium-free: Less than 5 mg sodium per serving.
- Low sodium: 140 mg sodium or less per serving.
- Very low sodium: 35 mg sodium or less per serving.

### Reduced/Less/Fewer

A food has at least 25 percent less of something like calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, or sodium than the regular food or a similar food to which it is compared.

Source: US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FDA Backgrounder, “The Food Label,” May 1999.

## Tips for eating out

- Look for low fat, low cholesterol meals – avoid fried, baked, au gratin, crispy, or stuffed foods.
- Select steamed, broiled, baked, grilled, poached, or roasted foods.
- Ask for selections that are heart healthy even if they are not listed on the menu or to ask that foods on the menu be prepared differently or with substitutions.
- Look for vegetables seasoned with herbs and spices or ask for your meal to be unseasoned and bring your own low sodium seasonings.
- Ask for sauces and salad dressings on the side.
- Choose low fat desserts, like frozen yogurt, sherbet or fruit.
- When eating at a friend’s or family member’s house, offer to bring a low fat heart healthful dish.
- Use these tips when dining at ethnic restaurants.  
Choose: Steamed instead of fried rice  
Red marinara sauce instead of creamy  
Corn tortillas instead of flour

## Reducing your heart disease risk

There are many other things you can do to reduce your risk for heart disease.

**Be physically active** – Physical activity helps to improve blood cholesterol levels by raising your HDL cholesterol and lowering your LDL cholesterol. It may also help you lose weight, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress.

**Maintain a healthful weight** – Excess weight tends to increase your LDL (bad) cholesterol level. Losing weight may help you lower your LDL cholesterol level and triglycerides and raise your HDL cholesterol level.

**Quit smoking** – Smoking increases your risk for stroke, heart disease and heart attack. But if you quit smoking, in one year your risk of heart disease will drop by more than half. For help in quitting smoking, talk with your personal physician or a member of your health care team or sign up for a health education class (see the section on “For More Information on page 5”).

**Limit alcohol intake** – Drinking too much alcohol can raise your triglycerides, blood pressure, and damage your heart, brain, and liver. If you drink alcohol, have only a moderate amount – one drink a day for women; two drinks a day for men. One drink = 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1 ½ ounces of 80-proof whiskey.

**Keep scheduled Health Assessment visits with your personal physician** – By seeing your physician regularly for preventive care, you can work together to reduce your heart disease risk.

Know your family history: Your genes affect how fast LDL cholesterol is made and removed from the blood. Talk with your personal physician or a member of your health care team if you have a family history of high cholesterol and set up a regular follow up schedule.

### For more information

Visit [members.kaiserpermanente.org](http://members.kaiserpermanente.org)

- Click on Get health advice and read the featured Health Topics on fitness, mind/body health, nutrition, and weight management.
- Sign-up for a free, online personalized Healthy Lifestyles Program to help you lose weight, quit smoking, manage stress, or improve your eating and physical activity habits.
- Sign-up for the 10,000 Steps Program to track your daily steps and physical activity online using a step counter.

### Take one of our health education programs

- Sign-up for Nutrition for Cholesterol Control or Nutrition for Weight Control. Call your appointment representative Monday through Friday, 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., and weekends and holidays from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at (703) 359-7878 or 1-800-777-7904. TTY: (703) 359-7616 or 1-800-700-4901.
- Take a class on smoking cessation or managing stress. Call your Health Education Department 24-hour automated services at (301) 816-6565 or 1-800-444-6696 or visit [members.kaiserpermanente.org](http://members.kaiserpermanente.org) for more information about the Commit to Quit and Managing Stress and Anxiety Programs.

### Get your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise®* or *Healthwise® for Life Handbook*

- Read the chapters on nutrition and physical activity.

### Call Kaiser Permanente Healthphone

- Listen to recorded health messages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 1-800-332-7563 or 1-800-777-9059 TTY. Select messages:
  - #141 – Eating a Healthier Diet
  - #266 – How to Lower Your Cholesterol
  - #311 – How to Cut Down on Salt
  - #329 – Reducing the Risk of Heart Attack

### Use these additional resources

- Visit the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Web site at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov) or call their toll free Heart Health Information line for messages in English and Spanish at 1-800-575-WELL.
- Visit the American Heart Association Web site at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

*The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your personal physician or a member of your health care team.*



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