Heart Healthy Eating Tips

Healthy eating can lower your risk of heart disease by helping you control your weight, lower your cholesterol, and prevent or control high blood pressure.

Follow Canada’s Food Guide for the recommended number of servings and serving sizes in each food group.

Choose carefully when eating out, and eat out rarely.

• Order smaller size portions or share with a friend. Or pack up half and take it for lunch the next day.
• Ask for gravies, sauces, or salad dressing on the side and use only a little.
• Choose lower fat and lower sodium foods.

Tips to help eat less fat

1. Eat fewer of these high fat foods:
   › Fried foods
   › Processed meats
   › Potato chips
   › Fatty cuts of meat
   › Gravies and cream-based sauces
   › Foods with trans fats

2. Use low fat ways to cook such as:
   › Broil
   › Bake
   › Barbecue
   › Steam
   › Poach
   › Microwave
3. Buy low fat dairy foods such as:
   • Skim, 0.5% or 1% milk
   • Frozen yogurt, or yogurt, with less than 2% milk fat (M.F.)
   • Low fat cheese with less than 10% M.F.

4. Eat smaller portions of meat:
   • Two and a half ounces (75 grams) is a serving. This is slightly smaller than the size of a deck of cards.
   • Trim all the fat you can see from the meat before cooking.
   • Eat red meat (beef, pork, lamb) no more than 3 times per week.

5. Choose poultry (like chicken) and fish more often.
   • Eat fish at least twice a week.
   • Do not eat the poultry skin.
   • Serve fish without batter or coating.
   • Choose fresh or frozen fish.
   • Salmon, mackerel, (not king mackerel) anchovies, sardines, herring, trout, and tuna are good choices for omega-3, a healthy fat.
   • For canned fish, choose fish canned in water instead of oil.
   • Don’t use a lot of sauce.
6. Eat a meatless meal at least twice a week. Legumes, lentils, and tofu are great sources of low fat protein. Split pea soup, meatless chili, lentil soup, and hummus are good options.

7. Although unsalted nuts are a healthy option, eat no more than 1/4 cup each day (almonds, walnuts, peanuts etc.)

8. Use soft tub margarines and healthy oils.
   • These are lower in saturated and trans fats.
   • A soft tub margarine is one that says “non-hydrogenated” on the label.
   • Canola, olive, peanut, and sesame oils are healthier oils.
   • Add no more than 3-6 teaspoons of fat to your food a day. Some people may need even less.

9. Eat fewer 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.
Tips to help lower your sodium (salt) intake

1. Don’t use the saltshaker at the table.

2. Eat more fresh foods, especially vegetables and fruit.

3. Cook your own meals more often. Restaurant and take out meals 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, deli meats).

6. Avoid foods that are smoked, cured, pickled, or salted.

7. Use only small amounts of salt when cooking (limit to ¼ teaspoon/day).

8. Compare different brands of cereals and breads, and choose ones with less sodium.

9. If you do occasionally use canned foods, choose ones with no added salt or less sodium and rinse well before using (e.g., canned tuna, lentils, and vegetables).

10. Limit condiments like mayonnaise or creamy salad dressings. Experiment with different herbs and spices or other flavorings such as lemon juice, zest from citrus fruit, or vinegar, to make food taste better.

11. Try salt-free spice blends (e.g. Mrs. Dash® or McCormick’s® No Salt Added Blends).
Tips to help you eat more fibre
1. Focus on vegetables and fruits. Fresh, frozen, or canned without added salt are all good choices.
2. Increase fibre gradually 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 fruit in season to save money.

Getting started
1. Change your eating habits bit by bit.
2. Set 1 or 2 goals at a time. Once you have reached your goal, set a new one. Here are 2 examples of goals:
   › “I will replace my morning muffin with a piece of fruit and 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 some cookbooks or online websites for heart healthy recipes. Make a grocery list. Plan your meals ahead of time.
5. Learn to read food labels.
6. When you do well with your goals, treat yourself, but not with food.
Extra help

There are many cookbooks to help you add variety to your meals. Any cookbook by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Dietitians of Canada, or the Canadian Diabetes Association has very 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*, by Sandra Nowlan
- *Low Salt DASH Dinners*, by Sandra Nowlan

For more information, visit these websites:

- Dietitians of Canada at www.dietitians.ca
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation at www.heartandstroke.com and search for ‘Healthy Eating’
- Pulse Canada for recipes using lentils, beans etc. www.pulsecanada.com
- Ontario White bean producers for recipes using beans www.ontariobeans.on.ca

You can also check out the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) or the Mediterranean style diet for more ways to follow a heart healthy diet.
When planning your meals, keep these guidelines in mind:

**Canada’s guidelines for healthy eating**

- Enjoy a variety of foods.
- Emphasize cereals, breads, other grain products, vegetables and fruits.
- Choose lower-fat dairy products, leaner meats and foods prepared with little or no fat.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight by enjoying regular physical activity and healthy eating.
- Limit salt, alcohol, and caffeine.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.
Looking for more health information?
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles, and online health information. For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to www.publiclibraries.ns.ca

*Capital Health promotes a smoke-free and scent-free environment.*
*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

**Capital Health, Nova Scotia**
www.cdha.nshealth.ca

*Prepared by:* Food and Nutrition Services
*Designed by:* Capital Health Library Services, Patient Education Team
*Printed by:* Dalhousie University Print Centre

The information in this brochure is provided for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice. If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

LC85-0524 Revised November 2013
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years.