

Heart-Healthy Eating

Heart-healthy eating is key to lowering your risk for heart disease and stroke. Heart-healthy eating means that you eat the right amount of healthy foods from all of the food groups for your age, weight, and height. Heart-healthy eating also means you do not eat a lot of foods that are high in sodium or have added sugars, too many calories, or unhealthy fats.

Q: What foods should I eat to help lower my risk for heart disease and stroke?

A: Choose a variety of foods from across all of the food groups.

- **Fruits and vegetables.** At least half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables.
- **Grains.** At least half of your grains should be whole grains.
- **Fat-free or low-fat dairy products.** These include milk, calcium-fortified soy drinks (soy milk), cheese, yogurt, and other milk products.
- **Different types of protein,** including seafood, skinless poultry, lean meats, beans, eggs, soy products, seeds, and unsalted nuts.
- **Oils.** Sources of healthier oils and fats include avocados, olives, and canola and olive oils.

Q: What foods should I limit to lower my risk of heart disease and stroke?

A: You should limit:

- **Saturated fats.** These fats are found in foods such as pizza, ice cream, fried chicken, many cakes and cookies, bacon, and hamburgers.

Check the Nutrition Facts label for saturated fat. Less than 10% of your daily calories should be from saturated fats.

- **Trans fats.** These fats are found mainly in commercially prepared baked goods, snack foods, and margarine. Check the Nutrition Facts label and choose foods with no trans fats as much as possible.
- **Sodium.** Sodium is found in salt, but most of the sodium we eat is not from salt that we add while cooking or at the table. Most of our sodium comes from processed foods like breads and rolls, cold cuts, pizza, hot dogs, cheese, pasta dishes, and condiments (like ketchup and mustard). Limit your daily sodium to less than 2,300 milligrams (equal to a teaspoon), unless your doctor says something else. Check the Nutrition Facts label for sodium. Foods with 20% or more of the “Daily Value” of sodium are high in sodium.
- **Added sugars.** Foods like fruit and dairy products naturally contain sugar. But you should limit foods that contain added sugars. These foods include sodas, sports drinks, cakes, candy, and ice cream. Check the Nutrition Facts label for added sugars and limit how much food with added sugars you eat.

Q: How can I tell what is in the foods I eat?

A: The Nutrition Facts label on most packaged foods has information about how many calories and how much saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars are in each serving.

For food that does not have a Nutrition Facts label, such as fresh salmon or a raw apple, you can use the MyPlate SuperTracker “Food-A-Pedia” tool at <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodapedia.aspx>.

Q: What tools can help me choose foods that are good for my heart?

A: The following resources can help you choose heart-healthy foods:

- **ChooseMyPlate** (choosemyplate.gov). This resource is based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. You can use the SuperTracker tool to create a personal daily food plan based on your goals.
- **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan** (www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash). The DASH diet is for people with hypertension to help them lower their blood pressure. But it can also be used to help prevent heart disease.
- **Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) diet** (www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/cholesterol_tlc.pdf, PDF file, 1.7 MB). The TLC diet helps people with unhealthy cholesterol levels.

For more information...

For more information on heart-healthy eating, call the OWH Helpline at 800-994-9662 or contact the following organizations:

ChooseMyPlate

www.choosemyplate.gov

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

Phone: 301-592-8573 • www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Nutrition.gov

www.nutrition.gov

American Heart Association

Phone: 800-242-8721 (English) or 888-474-8183 (Spanish) • www.heart.org

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