

Heart Healthy Eating

Eating and Your Heart

What you eat is important to your heart health. High cholesterol levels can increase your risk of developing heart disease. Choose foods that can help improve your cholesterol level. **The most important change is to limit the amount of saturated and trans fat that you eat.**

For more information on different kinds of fats see BC HealthFile [#68f Dietary Fats and Your Health](#).

How can I lower the amount of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol that I eat?

Choose foods low in saturated and trans fats.

- Eat 2 to 3 servings per day of **milk and milk alternatives**.

Heart Healthy Choice	Serving Size
Skim or 1% milk	250 mL (1 cup)
Yogurt made with skim or 1% milk	175 g (¾ cup)
Cheese with less than 20% milk fat	50 g (1½ oz)

- Eat 2 to 3 servings per day of **meat and meat alternatives**.

Heart Healthy Choice	Serving Size
Fish, chicken or turkey without the skin	75 g (2½ oz)
Cooked lentils or dry beans	175 mL (¾ cup)
Tofu	175 mL (¾ cup)
Lean meats	75 g (2½ oz)

Limit foods high in saturated fat such as:

- Butter, hard margarine, lard, and shortening
- Store bought baked goods
- Snack foods like crackers made from partially hydrogenated oils or shortening
- Creamy dressings and sauces
- Coconut milk
- Bacon, bologna, salami, sausages, and fatty cuts of meat

Limit foods high in cholesterol:

- Only animal foods have cholesterol. Avoid high cholesterol foods like organ meats.
- Limit egg yolks to no more than 4 per week - 2 per week if you have high cholesterol.
- Choose less often foods that are moderately high in cholesterol, such as shrimp, squid and cuttlefish.

What are healthy fats?

Choose foods that are sources of healthy fats such as mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fats more often.

Sources of mono-unsaturated fats

- Nuts
- Nut butters
- Canola and olive oils

Sources of poly-unsaturated fats

- Seeds such as flax, sunflower, and sesame
- Seed butters
- Safflower, sunflower, corn, and soybean oils, and non-hydrogenated soft margarine made from these oils
- Choose oily fish such as herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines or trout at least 2 times a week in place of meat. Fish is high in heart healthy poly-unsaturated omega 3 fats.

What other heart healthy foods should I choose?

Eat a wide variety of vegetables and fruits every day.

- Add vegetables to salads, soups, stews, and stir-fries. Season with lemon juice, vinegar, low-fat salad dressings and dips.
- Try fresh, frozen or pre-packaged fresh vegetable and fruit mixtures.
- Include dark green and orange vegetables every day.
- Choose fruit rather than fruit juice because it has more fibre.

Eat more whole grain, high fibre foods.

- Better choices include whole wheat, oats and oatmeal, rye, barley, corn, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, triticale, bulgar also known as cracked wheat, millet and quinoa.
- Choose less often refined cereals, white rice and breads made with white flour.

Enjoy nuts as part of a healthy diet.

- Eat nuts several times a week as a snack or as a tasty addition to cereal or low fat yogurt. A serving of nuts is 60 mL (¼ cup). Nuts are high in both calories and fat. Have smaller portions if you are trying to lose weight.

Try soy foods like soybeans, tofu and soy drinks.

- Try fresh or frozen soybeans (edamame) or tofu instead of meat.
- Other good choices include roasted soy nuts, unsweetened fortified soy beverages, and tempeh.

What about alcohol?

If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Limit to no more than 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women. One drink is 142 mL (5 ounces) of wine, 341 mL (12 ounces) of beer, or 43 mL (1½ ounces) of hard liquor.

Will it help if I lose weight?

If you are overweight, losing weight can help lower your blood cholesterol level.

- Aim for a healthy Body Mass Index also known as a BMI. Health Canada's Body Mass Index Nomogram will help you to find your BMI: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/weights-poids/guide-ld-adult/bmi_chart_java-graph_imc_java_e.html
- Aim for a healthy waist measurement. Having a waist measurement larger than 102 cm (40 inches) for men and 88 cm (35 inches) for women may increase your risk of developing health problems like heart disease.
- Eat a well balanced diet that includes all 4 of the food groups from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html.

- Limit drinks that have added sugar such as pop, iced tea and sweetened coffee drinks.
- Choose healthy fat sources but remember that all fats are high in calories.
- Choose cooking methods that do not need extra fat such as broiling, poaching, baking, roasting, microwaving and steaming.
- Limit the amount of fat that you add to foods.
- Be physically active every day. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. Start slowly and increase time and effort gradually.

Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

For more information on physical activity, see [Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Active Living](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide) at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide.

For More Information

Visit the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada website at: www.heartandstroke.ca

For more nutrition information, click on www.dialadietitian.org or call Dial-A-Dietitian at 1-800-667-3438 toll-free in BC or 604-732-9191 in Greater Vancouver to speak to a registered dietitian.



For more BC HealthFile topics visit www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm, or visit your local public health unit.

Call the BC NurseLine to speak to a registered nurse, available 24-hours every day:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-215-4700
- In BC, call toll-free 1-866-215-4700
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- Pharmacist available 5pm to 9am every day
- Translation services in over 130 languages upon request.

Visit BC HealthGuide OnLine – a world of health information you can trust at www.bchealthguide.org