

Heart-healthy eating

Your guide to a healthier lifestyle



Table of contents

Tip 1 Choose the right fats _____	4
Tip 2 Reduce the sodium (salt) in your food_____	8
Tip 3 Limit added sugar _____	10
Tip 4 Eat more vegetables and fruits _____	11
Tip 5 Select whole grains _____	12
Tip 6 Choose lean protein sources_____	13
Tip 7 Be a savvy shopper _____	14
Tip 8 Plan ahead: create daily menus_____	18
Tip 9 Allow yourself an occasional treat_____	20
Tip 10 Maintain a healthy weight _____	22
Notes_____	26

Overview

A heart-healthy diet focuses on:

- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Beans/lentils, seeds, nuts
- Low-fat dairy
- Fruits
- Fish/seafood, poultry, lean meats/
plant-based protein
- Heart-healthy oils and fats

It's never too late to embrace a healthier lifestyle. Heart-healthy eating may help control cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and weight. This in turn may help manage, reverse, or prevent a number of chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes.

Follow these 10 heart-healthy diet tips and you will be on your way to creating a healthy lifestyle you will actually stick to.

A heart-healthy diet is low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars.



Tip 1: Choose the right fats

Dietary fats are essential to our body, but it is important to choose the right kind. There are “good fats” and “bad fats.” The different types of fats can impact your blood cholesterol levels.

Types of dietary fat

Good fats:

- Mono-unsaturated fat
- Polyunsaturated fat

Bad fats:

- Saturated fat
- Trans fat

Cholesterol

This fat-like substance is required for good health. However, high levels in the blood can cause heart and blood vessel diseases (figure 1). Your liver makes cholesterol, but your levels can be directly impacted by the foods that you eat.

How can I improve my numbers?

Focus on choosing the right type of fat. Saturated fat and trans fat are “bad fats” because they increase your blood cholesterol levels and your risk of heart disease. Reducing saturated fat, avoiding trans fat and replacing them with healthy Unsaturated Fats will lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Total cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL
HDL (“good”) cholesterol	Men: greater than 40 mg/dL Women: greater than 50 mg/dL Optimal heart health: greater than 60 mg/dL
LDL (“bad”) cholesterol	Less than 130 mg/dL Optimal heart health: less than 70 mg/dL
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL



Figure 1. Development of Atherosclerosis. If you have too many cholesterol particles in your blood, cholesterol may build up on your artery walls and form something called plaque. Plaque may narrow or clog up your arteries.



Saturated fats = bad fat

Sources/foods to limit

- High-fat meats: regular ground beef, fatty cuts of meat (beef, lamb, pork), bologna, hot dogs, sausage, bacon, spareribs, lard, fatback
- High-fat dairy products: butter, full-fat cheese, cream, cream sauces, ice cream, whole milk, 2% milk, sour cream
- Poultry (chicken, turkey) skin
- Fried foods
- Tropical oils: palm, palm kernel, or coconut oils

The American Heart Association recommends reducing saturated fat to no more than 5-6% of your total daily calories.

Daily calories	Recommended saturated fat per day
2000	11 – 13 grams
1800	10 – 12 grams
1500	8 – 10 grams
1200	6.5 – 8 grams

Saturated fat content of popular foods

- 1 slice cheddar cheese = 3.5 grams saturated fat
- ½ cup ice cream = 4.5 grams saturated fat
- 1 tablespoon butter = 7 grams saturated fat
- 1 slice Pizza Hut’s meat lover’s pizza = 10 grams saturated fat
- Burger King’s Whopper with cheese = 16 grams saturated fat
- Bowl of Panera Bread’s New England clam chowder = 24 grams saturated fat
- The Cheesecake Factory’s original cheesecake = 34 grams saturated fat
- Olive Garden’s chicken alfredo = 56 grams saturated fat



Trans fat = worst fat

Trans fat can raise your bad (LDL) cholesterol and lower your good (HDL) cholesterol. Consuming them can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Trans fats are mainly found in processed foods and it is important to avoid them.

Sources/foods to limit

- All foods made with hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil
- Store-bought baked goods: snack cakes (like Little Debbie products), cookies, pie crusts, crackers, frosting, cakes, sprinkles
- Mixes: cake mixes, pancake and waffle mixes, hot chocolate mixes
- Snacks: chips, microwave popcorn, candy, cereal (like Apple Jacks)
- Fried foods: french fries, donuts, fried chicken
- Refrigerated dough: canned Biscuits (including breakfast sandwiches), cinnamon rolls, frozen pizzas, tortillas
- Vegetable shortening, stick margarine, frozen dinners
- Non-dairy creamer (including powdered creamers), non-dairy whipped topping

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), removing trans fat from processed foods could prevent thousands of heart attacks and deaths each year.

In June of 2018, the FDA declared manufacturers are no longer allowed to add trans fat to foods. However, products that were made with trans fat before the deadline may still take time to work their way through our food supply. In the meantime, pay attention to your food labels and read the ingredients.

Be careful

If a food has less than half a gram (0.5g) of trans fat per serving, the manufacturer can list "0 grams of trans fat." If the food lists "hydrogenated oil" or "partially hydrogenated oil" in the ingredient list, it contains trans fat (even if the label says 0 grams).

Heart-healthy fats

When consuming fats, choose mono-unsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats – these are the "good" or "healthy" fats. When used in place of saturated or trans fats, mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats may help lower your total blood cholesterol levels while giving you essential fatty acids and energy.

Sources/foods to choose

- Olive oil
- Vegetable and nut/seed oils (avocado, canola, peanut, sesame, sunflower, soybean oils)
- Avocados
- Unsalted, dry roasted or raw nuts and seeds (almonds, cashews, pecans, peanuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts, etc.)
- All-natural nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, etc.)
- Choose brands with as few ingredients as possible; avoid those processed with palm oil

Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 fatty acids help to lower triglyceride levels, reduce the risk for blood clots and heart attacks, and promote healthy brain function. Omega-3's also reduce inflammation, which plays a major role in diseases like heart disease.

Sources/foods to choose

- Fatty coldwater fish: salmon, tuna, herring, trout, sardines, mackerel
 - » For this reason, the American Heart Association recommends eating fish at least two times per week (serving = 3-3.5 ounces)
- Walnuts, ground flaxseed, flaxseed oil, chia seeds
- Omega-3 fortified eggs

What about supplements?

The best way to reap the benefits of omega-3's is from food. Whole foods contain many nutrients besides omega-3s which work together to keep your heart-healthy. If you already have heart disease or high triglycerides and are not able to get enough omega-3's through your diet, ask your healthcare professional if taking a supplement is right for you.



Dietary cholesterol

Dietary cholesterol comes from animal sources such as meat, eggs, and dairy. Foods from plants do not contain cholesterol.

Cholesterol in food has little effect on blood cholesterol levels. Saturated and trans fats in foods cause a much greater increase in bad (LDL) cholesterol. However, some high cholesterol foods may also be high in saturated fat. Because of this, limit foods high in cholesterol and saturated fat in your diet, such as fatty meats and full-fat dairy products.

What about eggs?

While eggs contain cholesterol, they are also a good source of quality protein and many vitamins and minerals. It's what you eat with your eggs that matters. The saturated fat in breakfast meats, butter, cheese, and pastries will raise your blood cholesterol much more than the cholesterol in your egg. The refined carbohydrates in white toast, bagels, biscuits, and muffins will increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, and other vascular diseases. Instead, eat eggs with vegetables such as spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes, and avocados paired with a slice of whole grain bread or fruit, and you've got yourself a balanced breakfast. You can enjoy 6-7 eggs each week as part of a healthy diet (no more than 2 eggs per day).

What about "fat-free" or "low-fat" foods?

Foods that are naturally fat-free or low-fat are great for your health, such as most fruits, vegetables, grains, and dried beans. But processed foods labeled "low-fat" and "fat-free" are often higher in salt, sugar, or chemicals than their full-fat counterparts. For example, low-fat and non-fat salad dressings are nearly always higher in sugar and salt. These are not always healthy choices. Remember, what matters most is the type of fat you eat.

Tip 2: Reduce the sodium (salt) in your food

Sodium is a mineral found naturally in many foods as well as in salt. Eating too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure (hypertension). Hypertension may lead to heart disease, stroke, heart failure, and kidney disease. Too much salt can cause swelling in your feet, ankles, or belly.

How much sodium do I need?

The body needs a small amount of sodium (less than 500mg) to function properly. On average, Americans eat more than 3,400mg of sodium a day, more than double the recommended limit for most adults.

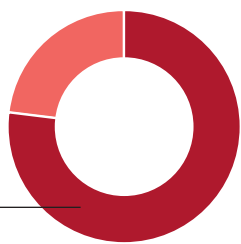
Just adding ¼ teaspoon of table salt to foods – about a “pinch” – uses 575mg of your daily sodium limit (1 teaspoon = 2,300 mg of sodium).

**1,500 milligrams
sodium per day**

American Heart Association & World Health Organization Recommendation

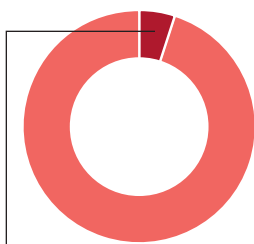
The salt shaker is not to blame

Although reducing the amount of salt you add to food at the table or while cooking is a good first step, the majority of the salt you eat is already in your food. Eating fresh foods and cooking at home can greatly reduce the amount of sodium you eat.



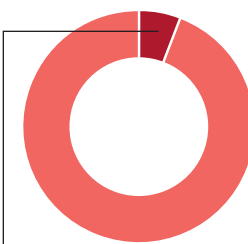
77%

More than 75% of the sodium Americans eat comes from restaurant, prepackaged, and processed foods.



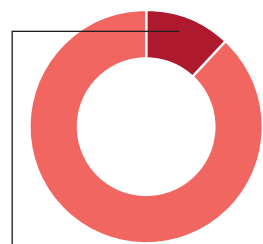
5%

Only 5% of dietary sodium is added during home cooking.



6%

Only 6% is added at the table.



12%

The remaining 12% of dietary sodium occurs naturally in foods.



Tips for decreasing your sodium intake

- Choose less processed foods:
 - » Fruits, vegetables, fresh proteins (lean beef, poultry, fish, game, eggs), milk, yogurt, whole grains, dried beans/lentils, unsalted nuts/seeds
- Prepare your meals at home. Do not add salt at the table or when cooking. Use herbs, spices, and citrus in place of salt to add flavor to foods.
- Swap out high sodium ingredients for lower sodium ones.
- Make your own or choose low sodium sauces and dressings. Try mixing a tablespoon of balsamic vinegar with equal parts dijon mustard, lemon juice, and olive oil for a great salad dressing.
- Taste alone may not tell you which foods are high in sodium. Always read the nutrition facts label (see page 16).
- Look for foods labeled:
 - » **Sodium free:** less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving
 - » **Very low sodium:** 35 milligrams or less per serving
 - » **Low sodium:** 140 milligrams or less per serving
- Remember, “reduced sodium” and “unsalted” products still have salt in them.
- Rinse canned vegetables or beans to remove about 40% of the sodium.
- Beware of restaurant foods and limit the times you eat out each week; a restaurant meal may easily have more than 1,500 mg of sodium. For more tips on staying heart-healthy while dining out, see page 21.

What about salt substitutes?

Be aware that salt substitutes usually replace the sodium with potassium, which may cause medical problems for some people. “Lite salts” still contain sodium and may be too high for people on a sodium restriction. Talk with your healthcare provider about whether a salt substitute is right for you. Herbs and spices have no side effects.

Tip 3: Limit added sugar

There are two types of sugars in our diet: natural sugar and added sugar.

Natural sugars occur naturally in foods such as whole fruits, veggies, and dairy.

Added sugars include any sugars or caloric sweeteners that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation (such as putting sugar in your coffee or cereal). Added sugars include white sugar, brown sugar, agave nectar, honey, molasses, maple syrup, high fructose corn syrup, and many more.

Consuming whole foods that contain natural sugar is okay because they may also provide fiber, nutrients, protein and antioxidants. However, problems occur when too much added sugar is consumed.

Added sugars provide extra calories but zero nutrition. Consuming too much added sugar may cause weight gain, raise blood pressure and triglyceride levels, promote inflammation, may cause diabetes and fatty liver, and increase risk for heart attack and stroke. In fact, recent research has found that a diet high in added sugars can significantly increase the risk of dying from heart disease.

Tips on how to reduce your intake of added sugars

- **Read the nutrition facts label.** Sugar hides in dozens of foods you might not expect — even ones that don't taste sweet. If sugar is listed as one of the first few ingredients, that's a red flag. Sugar has many different names, such as: ingredients ending in "ose" (dextrose, maltose, sucrose), high fructose corn syrup, molasses, cane sugar, raw sugar, syrup, honey, evaporated cane juice, fruit juice concentrates, etc.
- **Choose real foods.** Cutting back on added sugar is much easier when you follow a healthy diet based on whole foods. Choose fresh fruit over desserts. Shop the perimeter of the grocery store, focusing on fresh ingredients. For more grocery shopping tips, see page 14.
- **Cut out sugary drinks.** More than 40% of the added sugar in Americans' diets comes from sugary beverages like soda, sweet tea, energy drinks, lemonade, and juice. Just one can of regular soda contains 10 teaspoons of added sugar (39g), or 140 calories and zero nutrition. Replace sweet drinks with water or sparkling water with flavorful add-ins like lemon, lime, fresh mint, cucumber, or mashed fruit.
- **Use sugar strategically.** Use your recommended sugar budget (9 tsp for men, 6 tsp for women) to add flavor to healthy foods. Add a small amount of maple syrup (and some fresh fruit and cinnamon) to plain oatmeal instead of flavored instant oats. Buy plain, unsweetened foods and add sweetener in minimum amounts yourself. You will add much less than the manufacturer.
- **Try other flavors.** Use fruit, vanilla/almond/coconut extract, spices, and citrus zests to add sweetness to foods without having to use sugar — and for less calories. Stevia and monk fruit are all-natural zero-calorie sweeteners.

Daily added sugar limit

Recommended by the American Heart Association

Men no more than:	Women no more than:
• 9 teaspoons	• 6 teaspoons
• 36 grams	• 25 grams
• 150 calories	• 100 calories



Tip 4: Eat more vegetables and fruits

Vegetables and fruits provide fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients (natural plant chemicals that help fight and prevent disease). Plus, they are low in calories. Include a fruit or veggie at every meal or snack and you will be well on your way to a healthier you.

How to include more fruits and veggies in your diet

- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Keep fruit visible so that you'll remember to eat it.
- Choose recipes that have vegetables or fruits as the main ingredients (e.g. vegetable stir-fry, fresh fruit mixed into salads).
- Stock up on frozen fruits and vegetables so that you'll always have them on hand. Many options are already sliced to save you time.
- Keep chopped vegetables in the fridge and add them to meals: omelets, soups, casseroles, pastas, sandwiches, etc.
- Apple, bananas, and oranges come naturally prepacked, making them great grab-and-go choices without refrigeration.
- Instead of crackers or chips, use carrots, bell peppers, or celery with dips such as hummus, peanut butter, or dressing. For more snack ideas, see page 24.
- Choose whole fruits and vegetables more often than juice. The more processed a food becomes, the more nutrients are lost. For example, a medium-sized orange contains 11 grams of sugar, plus fiber, while an 8 oz. glass of orange juice has 24 grams of sugar (about 2 oranges' worth of sugar) and no fiber.
- Eating a variety of colors – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and white – not only provides eye candy to your meals, but different colors provide different nutrients. Eat the rainbow.

Tip 5: Select whole grains

There are two main types of grain products: whole grains and refined grains.

Regularly consuming whole grains has been linked to reduced risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. Whole grains offer more fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants than refined grains, making whole grains the superior choice for your heart.



Whole grains contain the entire grain. Examples include whole wheat, oats/oatmeal, rye, barley, corn/popcorn, brown and wild rice, buckwheat, and quinoa.

Refined grains have been ground into flour or meal, which removes most of the grain and strips it of key nutrients. Examples include white rice, white bread, white pasta, and other foods that have been made with white flour (also called enriched wheat flour or all-purpose flour), including many baked goods.

Substitute refined grains for whole grains. Or, be adventurous and try a new whole grain, such as whole-grain farro, quinoa, buckwheat or barley. Try to eat at least half of your grains as whole grains.

Read the nutrition facts label. Make sure the word “whole” is the very first ingredient listed. “Multi-grain” or “wheat” isn’t enough. Just because it looks brown, doesn’t mean it’s a whole grain.

Fiber

Fiber has many health benefits. Fiber can help to lower cholesterol, keep your blood sugar stable, aid in digestion, promote a healthy gut and make it easier to lose weight.

Aim for 20-35 grams of fiber per day.

Some other great sources of fiber include fruits and vegetables (especially with the skin), nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.



Tip 6: Choose lean protein sources

Try to choose plant-based proteins, fish, and skinless poultry more often than red or processed meats.

Use healthier cooking methods such as baking, sautéing, or grilling rather than deep-frying or smothering in heavy sauces. For more heart-healthy cooking tips, see page 20.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends eating less than six ounces of lean animal protein per day.

One portion of meat is about the size of a deck of cards, or three ounces.

The AHA also recommends eating fish at least twice per week. Non-fried shellfish are a healthy substitute to many cuts of meat and poultry.

For meats, select lean cuts with the least visible fat, such as “round,” or “loin.” Trim off as much fat as you can before cooking and drain off any remaining fat after cooking. Avoid processed meats such as sausage, bologna, salami, and hot dogs.

Not all dairy products provide protein and calcium like low-fat milk and yogurt. Fatty foods like cheese, cream, and butter are high in saturated fat and should be used sparingly.

Protein can also come from plants. Legumes (beans, peas, lentils), nuts, seeds, and soy are good sources of protein and contain less fat and no cholesterol, making them great alternatives to meat. Plant-based proteins pack more nutrients into fewer calories compared to animal proteins, and they provide fiber. Research shows that those who eat more plant-based foods are healthier than heavy meat eaters.

Tip 7: Be a savvy shopper

The first step to eating healthy is making sure you have the right ingredients. With a little planning and some practice, you can shop like a pro.

Make a shopping list

Going to the store with a plan is key. Lists can help you stay focused and decrease unnecessary purchases, especially prepackaged and processed foods. Using a list as your guide will help save time and money. See page 15 for a heart-healthy shopping list.

Never shop hungry

People purchase more salty foods or sweets when they shop on an empty stomach. Eat a small snack or full meal at least 1-2 hours before shopping to ensure there will be no impulse buys. Make sure your snack or meal is balanced, including some protein, fat, and carbohydrates (for more snack ideas, see page 27).

Load up on the produce

Seasonal fruits and veggies not only have more flavor, but they're usually cheaper too. Spend most of your time in the produce section. If there's one thing you can do to improve your overall health, it's to eat more vegetables and fruits.



If you can't find the fresh produce, frozen fruits and vegetables (without sauces) are great alternatives.

Shop mostly the perimeter of the store

The fresh produce, fish, meat, and dairy are usually on the outside perimeter of most grocery stores and should be the main focus area for your shopping. However, use the aisles for healthy items on your list, such as old-fashioned oats, olive oil, nuts, dried beans, and spices.

Skip the junk

If you can't buy a bag of potato chips or box of cookies without eating the entire package in a couple of days, then don't buy them. If it's not in the house, it's not there to tempt you.

Choose plain versus flavored

Plain, original versions of foods and beverages are usually more nutritious than their flavored counterparts. The more processed and flavored an item becomes, the more calories, sodium, and sugar the item typically has. Choose plain options and flavor them yourself.

Do a final cart check

Before you pull into the checkout line, make sure your cart has 50% fruits and veggies, 25% lean and plant proteins, 25% whole grains — and don't forget to double check there are enough healthy fats, like avocados, nuts, seeds, nut butters, and olive oil.

Heart-healthy shopping list: best choices

Fruits

- All fresh & frozen
- Apples
- Unsweetened applesauce
- Apricots
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Berries: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, etc.
- Cherries
- Grapes
- Kiwis
- Melon
- Oranges
- Pears
- Peaches
- Pineapple
- Plums
- Raisins
- Watermelon
- Dried fruit, no sugar added
- Canned fruit, no sugar added

Vegetables

- All fresh & frozen (without sauce)
- Asparagus
- Bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Green beans
- Leafy greens
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Onions
- Scallion (green onions)
- Spinach
- Summer or spaghetti squash

- Tomatoes
- Zucchini

Starchy vegetables

- Acorn squash
- Corn
- Butternut squash
- Peas
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes

Grains

- Select 100% whole grain when possible
- Air-popped popcorn
- Barley
- Brown rice, wild rice
- Cereal with more than 5g of fiber and less than 10g of sugar per serving
- High-fiber whole grain pitas, whole wheat tortillas, etc.
- Old-fashioned or steel cut oats
- Quinoa
- Rice cakes
- Whole grain bread
- Whole grain pasta

Protein

- Chicken & turkey, skinless
- Rotisserie chicken, skinless
- Ground chicken or turkey
- Seafood
- Canned tuna or salmon
- Fish fillets, fresh or frozen
- Shrimp, scallops
- Eggs
- Beef & pork, loin cuts
 - » >90% Lean ground meat
- Nuts & seeds (low/no salt)
- Natural nut butters
- Edamame

- Beans: black, kidney, great northern, etc.
- Lentils
- Hummus
- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Soy/veggie burger (low salt)

Dairy

- Fat-free or 1% milk
- Soymilk or almond milk, unsweetened
- Yogurt or greek yogurt (<10g sugar)
- Cheese (reduced sodium, part-skim)

Other

- Water, zero-calorie flavored waters
- Olive oil
- Cooking spray
- Vinegar/flavored vinegar
- Mustard
- Low sodium/sugar pasta sauce
- Low sodium soup
- Unsalted chicken or vegetable broth/stock
- Vanilla extract
- Low sodium/sugar salad dressing
- Flavors in place of salt:
 - » Allspice, basil, bay leaf, cilantro, cinnamon, cloves, chili powder, chives, cumin, curry, dill, dry mustard, garlic or garlic powder, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, onion or onion powder, oregano, paprika, parsley, pepper, red pepper flakes, rosemary, saffron, sage, tarragon, thyme
 - » Lemon, citrus fruit juices
 - » Salt-free herb blends (Mrs. Dash)

Heart-healthy shopping list: choices to limit

Fruits

- Canned fruit packed in light or heavy syrup

Vegetables

- Veggies in a cream, butter, or cheese sauce or cooked with meat
- Fried vegetables: French fries, onion rings, etc.
- Vegetable juices (v8®, tomato)
- Instant mashed potato mix

Grains

- Limit white, refined grains
- Croissants, muffins, biscuits, donuts, pastries, cakes, cookies, pies
- Waffle/pancake mixes
- Sugar-sweetened cereals

- Instant or flavored oatmeal
- Microwave or buttered popcorn
- Boxed/seasoned rice or pasta mixes

Protein

- Fatty-cuts/marbled meat, 70-85% ground meat
- Poultry with skin
- Processed/cured meats: bologna, ham, lunchmeats, hot dogs, sausage, bacon, spareribs
- Fried or breaded meats
- Pre-marinated meats

Dairy

- Full-fat dairy products: whole milk, heavy cream, cream cheese, sour cream, cream, butter

- Processed cheeses
- Flavored and powder coffee creamer
- Stick margarine

Other

- Salt, sea salt, lite salt, seasoned salts (garlic salt, etc.)
- Msg, accent, meat tenderizers, many seasoning blends/rubs, flavor packets
- Frozen dinners
- Condiments: soy sauce
- Pickles, olives
- Salted crackers, pretzels, chips

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Read your labels

The front of a package may be visually appealing, but the information may be very misleading. The Nutrition Facts Label is the best place to find out what's actually in the package.

Servings per container and serving size

- The nutrition facts label information is based on one serving, not necessarily for the whole package.
- In this example, the serving size is 1 cup. If you ate 2 cups of this food, you would be doubling the calories and all of the nutrients. Look at the serving and keep in mind what you will actually be eating.
- In this example, the entire container contains 8 servings. If you ate the whole package in one sitting, you would have to multiply all the nutrients by 8. Some packages look like they are meant for one person, but they may contain several servings.
- When you compare calories and nutrients between brands, check to see if the serving size is the same.

Calories

- Calories are units of energy. If you take in too many calories without burning off enough through physical activity, you may gain weight, which may not be best for you health.
- When you look at the calories, also look at the serving size. Is this a meal? Or just a snack?
- Of course, eating quality calories (calories that provide nutrients) is important as well. Empty calories come from fats, added sugars or sometimes both — such as calories from sodas and “junk food.”

Fats and sodium

- Rather than focusing on total fat, it is more important to look at the type of fat. You want most of your fat to come from the heart-healthy mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Food companies are not required to list these “good” fats, so you can subtract the saturated and trans fats from the total fat to find out how much healthy fat this food is providing.
- To help reduce your risk of heart disease, reduce your intake of saturated fats and avoid trans fats entirely.
- While dietary cholesterol does not have a large effect on the cholesterol in your blood, you still want to limit your daily intake. Choose foods that have less.
- Limit sodium to reduce your risk of high blood pressure. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 1,500mg of sodium per day.

Carbohydrates, fiber and sugar

- The amount of total carbohydrates includes the amount of fiber, starches and sugar — both added and naturally occurring — in the food.

- Fiber has many heart-healthy benefits. You need 25-35 grams of fiber per day.
- Look for foods with little to no added sugar. Women: no more than 25g per day. Men: no more than 36g per day. If you have diabetes, look at total carbohydrates, not just the sugar content.

Protein

- There is no percent daily value (% DV) listed for protein because protein needs vary from person to person, and most Americans get enough protein in their diet.
- Choose proteins based on tips listed on page 13.

Healthy nutrients

These nutrients promote good health and may protect you from disease.

% Daily Value

- The % Daily Value (% DV) listed to the right of each nutrient on the label indicates how much each nutrient in a single serving contributes to an individual's daily nutrition needs. These numbers are based on a diet of 2,000 calories per day. You, personally, may need more or less than 2,000 calories per day. For some nutrients you may need more or less than 100% DV.
- You can use the % DV to determine if a food is high or low in a nutrient.
 - » 5% or less = low
Aim low in saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars.
 - » 20% or more = high
Aim high in vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Ingredients

Foods with more than one ingredient have an ingredient list on the label. Ingredients are listed in order by weight. The first ingredient is the one you're getting the most of, the last is what you're getting the least amount of. If there are too many ingredients you don't recognize, don't buy it. The less ingredients, the better.



Tip 8: Plan ahead - create daily menus

Now that you know which foods to feature in your heart-healthy diet and which ones to limit, it's time to put your plans into action.

Create daily menus using the tips listed on page 20. When selecting foods for each meal and snack, emphasize vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Choose lean protein sources and healthy fats, and limit salty foods and added sugars. Watch your portion sizes and add variety to your menu choices.

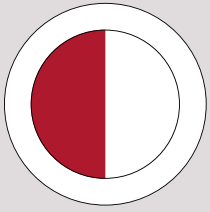
For example, if you have grilled salmon one evening, try a black-bean burger the next night. This helps ensure that you'll get all of the nutrients your body needs. Variety also makes your meals and snacks more interesting.

Set aside 30 minutes each week to sit down with your calendar and plan the week ahead. Schedule your physical activity, plan your meals, and make your shopping list. A little bit of planning up front not only saves you time but also sets an intention for success.

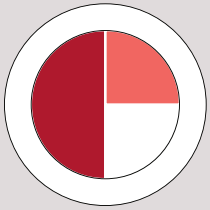


My plate planner

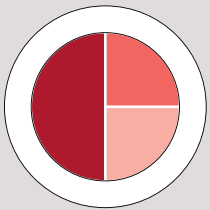
The Plate Method is a simple way to plan meals for you and your family.



Step 1: Divide an 8 or 9-inch plate in half and fill half of the plate with non-starchy vegetables. Choose from those listed in the vegetable section of the grocery list on page 15.



Step 2: Fill one quarter (25%) of the plate with whole grains or starchy vegetables. Choose from those listed in the grain or starchy vegetable sections of the grocery list on page 15.



Step 3: Fill the remaining quarter (25%) with protein foods. Choose from those listed in the protein section of the grocery list on page 15.

Following this plate strategy can shape up your diet as well as your heart and waistline.



Heart-healthy cooking tips

One of the greatest benefits to cooking at home is that you are in control. Ever had a meal and wished there was “more of this,” or “less of that”? By cooking at home, you can create dishes exactly the way you like and save money compared to eating out.

- Use fresh, natural ingredients whenever possible.
- Cook by grilling, baking, braising, roasting, searing, and sautéing to bring out the natural flavors in foods.
- Swap out ingredients for healthier choices (ex. unsalted chicken broth for regular chicken broth, olive oil in place of butter, frozen corn for canned corn).
- Use your time and your freezer wisely. Cook once and prepare extra for several other meals. Freeze leftovers for an easy, ready-made healthy meal.
- Try new recipes. Rather than eating the same meals over and over, mix it up by trying something new.

Recipe resources



Sentara Health

[whohasyourheart.com/category/healthy-tips-recipes/recipes/](https://www.whohasyourheart.com/category/healthy-tips-recipes/recipes/)



Mayo Clinic

[mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes/heart-healthy-recipes/rcs-20077163](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes/heart-healthy-recipes/rcs-20077163)



Harvard School of Public Health

nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/recipes-2/home-cooking/



National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/eat/recipes.htm



Million Hearts

millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/recipes.html

Tip 9: Allow yourself an occasional treat

Allow yourself an indulgence every now and then. A snack size candy bar or handful of potato chips won't derail your heart-healthy diet — but don't let it turn into an excuse for giving up on your healthy eating plan. If overindulgence is the exception, rather than the rule, you'll balance things out over the long term. What's important is that you eat healthy foods most of the time.

Staying heart-healthy while dining out

The larger-than-normal portions offered when dining out make it all too easy to consume more calories, saturated fat, sodium, and sugars than we need. For these reasons, eating out should be considered a treat, not an everyday experience. This includes fast food, sit down restaurants, and carry out. However, eating out is a part of our lives. With thoughtful planning and these strategies, eating out can still fit into a heart-healthy diet on occasion.

Balance

If you know ahead of time that you're going out to eat, be more mindful of your other meals for the day.

Have a game plan

Most restaurants offer their menus and nutrition information online. Looking up what they offer beforehand gives you time to think through your options. Last-minute choices are frequently less healthful.

Websites such as Healthy Dining Finder (<https://www.healthydiningfinder.com>) can help you search for restaurants near you that offer healthy selections.

Know your terms

Pay attention to how a dish is described. Terms like battered/breaded, buttery, cheesy, creamy, crispy, fried, rich, and smothered are hints that a food may not be the healthiest choice. Look for grilled, baked, broiled, steamed, or lightly sautéed options.

Control portions

Ask if smaller portions are available, share the meal with a friend, or ask for a to-go box and take half the meal home for later.

Rethink your drink

Sugar-sweetened beverages and alcoholic drinks contain a large number of empty calories and cause weight gain. Water and unsweetened tea are your best choices.

Ask

Don't be afraid to specify how you want your food prepared or to ask your server about ways to make a healthier meal. Potential requests:

- Can the dish be made with fish instead of beef?
- Will you ask the chef not to add salt to my meal?
- May I have a different vegetable in place of French fries?
- Will you please bring the sauce (or salad dressing) on the side?



Use these tips for each type of cuisine

Chinese

Instead of high fat dishes such as egg rolls, sesame chicken, or fried rice, try steamed chicken, seafood, or tofu with brown rice and lots of vegetables or a stir-fry. Chinese food can be high in salt and sugar, so order it as plain as possible with sauces on the side and avoid most soups.

Sandwich shop

Try whole grain bread options topped with vegetables, mustard, and a splash of oil and vinegar. Hummus or avocado can be great heart-healthy substitutes for both mayo and cheese. Watch out for processed deli meats, which often contain a lot of salt and artificial ingredients.

Italian

Instead of pasta topped or filled with cream, cheese, or meat, try grilled or poached seafood with a small order of pasta in a white wine or tomato sauce. Order shellfish (shrimp, mussels, clams) as long as they aren't deep-fried or cooked in butter. Pair bread with heart-healthy olive oil, not butter — but try to fill up on a salad first rather than bread. If you're choosing pizza, go with a thin crust with half the cheese and double the veggies.

Japanese

Instead of tempura-style rolls or rolls with mayonnaise, try fresher sushi or sashimi with fish high in omega-3's, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, or halibut. Add avocado for additional heart-healthy benefits. Be mindful of the sodium in soy sauce. Even 1 tablespoon of "reduced sodium" soy sauce can have up to 600 milligrams of sodium.

Steakhouse

Choose lean cuts of beef such as round, sirloin, or tenderloin and trim any visible fat. Choose petite or children's portions to keep your meat serving to about 3-4 oz or try kebabs. Swap out creamed spinach or fully loaded baked potatoes for steamed vegetables or a side salad.

Mexican

Limit yourself when chips and salsa are brought at the beginning of the meal. Choose seafood, chicken, or vegetable fajitas. Choose black beans over refried beans and use 'pico de gallo' or avocado instead of sour cream or cheese.

Fast food

Choose a plain hamburger, grilled chicken sandwich, or veggie burger without mayo or special sauce. Use lettuce leaves in place of a bun. Skip the fries or onion rings and choose a side salad or apple slices. Enjoy water instead of a soda. All fast food chains are required to list their nutrition information in the store as well as online. Make sure you check this information before ordering.

Buffets

Limitless food supplies inspire us to put far more on our plates than we need to. Start with a large salad from the salad bar to fill up on first before hitting the rest of the buffet. Choose vegetables with steamed, grilled, or broiled entrées.

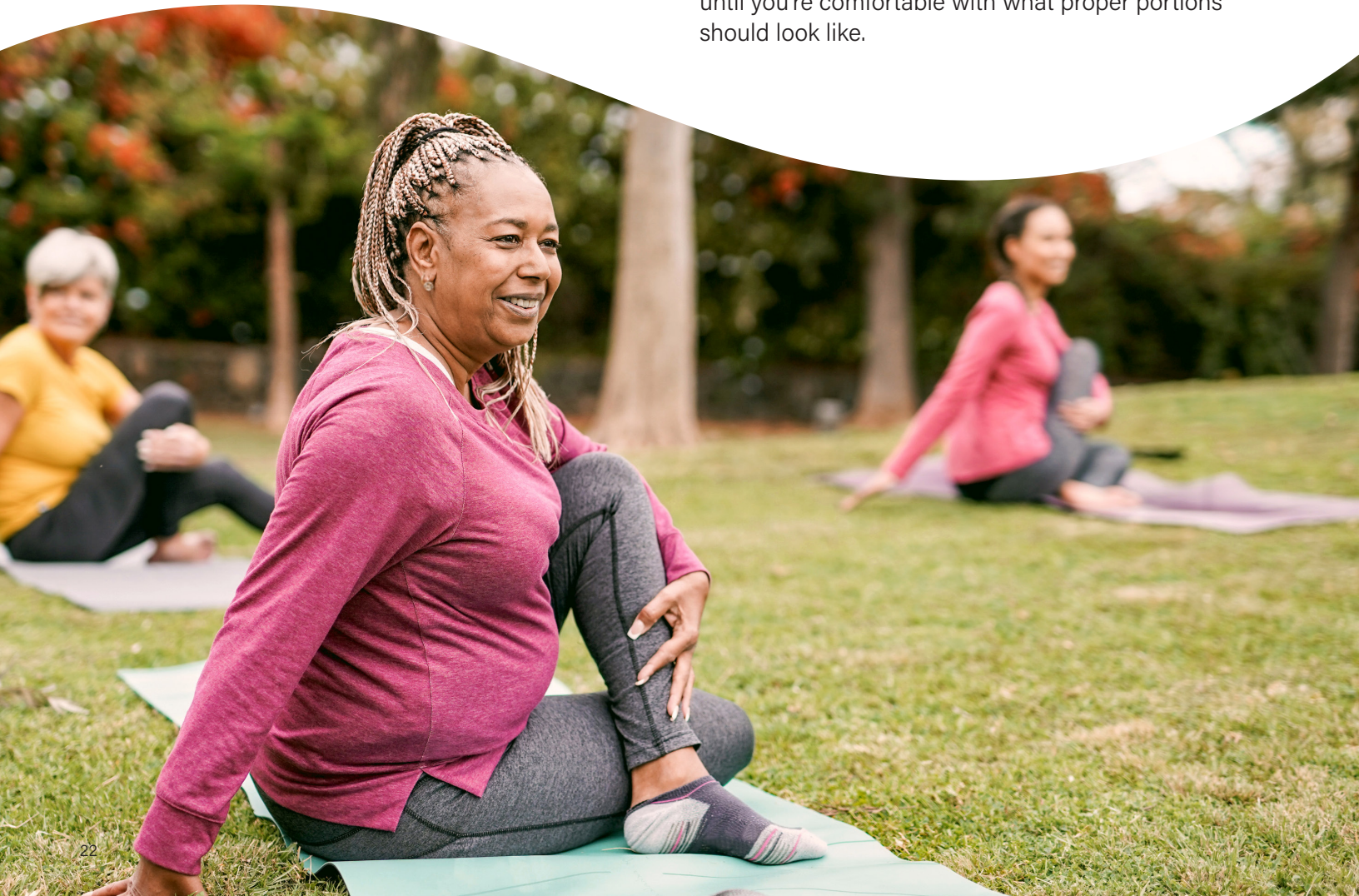
Tip 10: Maintain a healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent or control many diseases, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems, and certain cancers. It also helps you to feel good about yourself and gives your body energy.

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight involves a balance between the calories you eat (energy in) and the energy you burn (energy out). To lose weight, you will need to make lifestyle changes that burn more calories than you eat.

Control your portions

How much you eat is just as important as what you eat. Manage portion size by using smaller plates and bowls. Portion out a single serving rather than eating from the box or bag. Eat larger portions of low-calorie, nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and smaller portions of high-calorie, high-sodium foods, such as processed or fast foods. Use measuring cups and spoons or a scale until you're comfortable with what proper portions should look like.



Serving size portions

Protein

- 1 ounce serving: 1 egg, ½ cup cooked beans, ½ cup tofu, 2 tablespoons peanut butter, ¼ cup unsalted nuts/seeds
- A serving of meat, fish or chicken is about 2-3 ounces, or about the size and thickness of a deck of cards

Vegetables

- 1 cup raw vegetables equals the size of a baseball
- ½ cup chopped or cooked vegetables equals ½ a baseball

Fruit

- 1 medium fruit equals a tennis ball
- ½ cup chopped or canned (in own juice/water) equals ½ a baseball
- ¼ cup dried fruit equals the size of an egg

Fat

- 1 tablespoon oil equals a poker chip
- 2 tablespoons low-sodium salad dressing equals a golf ball
- 1/3 of medium avocado
- 2 tablespoons nut butter equals a golf ball

Grains

- ½ cup cooked whole grain pasta or brown rice equals a hockey puck or lightbulb
- 1 slice whole grain bread equals a CD (compact disc)
- 1 cup high fiber cereal equals a baseball
- 3 cup air popped popcorn equals 3 baseballs

Dairy

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup yogurt equals 1 baseball
- 1 ½ ounce cheese equals 3-4 dice

Keep snacking in check

Calories from snacks, especially from packaged foods, can add up quickly and lead to weight gain. Snack when you are hungry, not because you are bored, stressed, tired, or upset. A balanced snack (between 200–300 calories) includes carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) paired with lean protein and/or healthy fat.

Heart-healthy snack ideas

- Fruit + unsalted nuts/seeds (1/4 cup) or natural nut butter (2 tbsp)
- Fruit or veggies + part-skim cheese stick
- Fruit or veggies + hard boiled egg
- Veggie sticks (like carrots or bell pepper slices) + hummus or guacamole
- Whole grain crackers or brown rice cake + natural nut butter (2 tbsp)
- Low-fat Greek yogurt — no sugar added or less than 10g sugar
- “Ants on a log” (celery, natural peanut butter and raisins)
- Avocado on toasted whole grain bread
- Trail mix: 1 oz unsweetened whole grain cereal with 1 tbsp each raisins and unsalted nuts
- Reduced-sodium cottage cheese or light ricotta cheese with fruit (blueberries, peaches, etc.)
- Single-serve unsweetened applesauce sprinkled with 1 tbsp unsalted slivered almonds
- Mini pizza: top a whole wheat pita bread with a slice of tomato and a few tablespoons of grated cheese; broil for 1 minute
- High-fiber whole grain tortilla with nut butter (2 tbsp)
- Tuna on whole grain crackers
- 1 plain packaged dried fruit and nut bar (look for one with little added sugar) — KIND bars

Do not skip meals

This often leads to overeating at the next meal and can negatively impact your metabolism.

Track your intake

Keep a food journal. Studies show that food journals help people to lose more weight. Writing in a journal will increase your awareness of the calories, nutrients, and food portions you eat.

Track the times you eat, the foods you eat (the more detailed, the better), portion sizes, and notes about what you were doing or feeling at the time.

Consider downloading an app like MyFitnessPal, Lose It., FitBit, or HabitBull.

Stay hydrated

Water is calorie-free, helps you burn more calories, and may even suppress your appetite if consumed before meals. The benefits are even greater when you replace sugary beverages with water.

Eat mindfully

Keep distractions to a minimum while eating and focus on your food. Tune into your body and stop eating when you are full. Pay attention to whether you are eating out of hunger or to satisfy an emotion. This awareness will improve meal satisfaction, prevent overeating, and prevent eating for the wrong reasons.

It's not a 'diet,' it's a lifestyle

Instead of going on a diet, make it your goal to become a healthier, happier, and fitter person. Focus on nourishing your body instead of depriving it. Make healthy changes each day for long-term weight loss and health rather than following fads or crash dieting.

Get moving

Being active will help with weight loss because your body burns stored calories. Increase your physical activity and get moderate exercise most days of the week. Start slowly, such as walking briskly for 15 minutes twice a day. Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

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