

Heart Healthy Eating: Cholesterol

Why This Diet Is Important

The levels of cholesterol in your blood can affect your risk for developing heart disease. Choosing foods that are lower in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol and which contain unsaturated fat and fibre can help improve your cholesterol.

Saturated fat is found in animal-based foods, such as meat and high-fat dairy products, as well as in tropical fats, such as coconut and palm oil. Saturated fat tends to be solid at room temperature. **Trans fat** is found in commercially-fried foods, hard margarine, and some processed foods, such as store-bought cookies, commercially-baked goods, and crackers that are made with shortening or partially hydrogenated oils. Trans fat is also known as partially-hydrogenated fat or vegetable shortening. **Cholesterol** is found only in animal foods such as meats, eggs, and dairy products. **Saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol can have a negative effect** on your blood cholesterol levels.

Unsaturated fat can have a positive effect on your blood cholesterol levels. **Unsaturated fat**, which is found mostly in plant foods, such as canola oil, olive oil, and nuts, can be used regularly in small amounts. **Omega-3 fat**, and unsaturated fat found in ground flax seed and fish, is also a healthy fat and should be eaten more often.

Steps You Can Take

1. Aim for a healthy body weight. Weight loss can improve your cholesterol levels.
2. Eat a variety of foods recommended in *Canada's Food Guide*.
3. Select your fat sources wisely.
 - a. Choose foods that are lower in saturated fat.
 - b. Include small amounts of vegetable-based fats or unsaturated fats (monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats) in your diet.
 - c. Avoid foods made with trans, hydrogenated, or partially-hydrogenated fats.
4. Limit intake of sweetened food and beverages such as pop, specialty coffee, cakes, pastries, or candies.
5. Choose foods high in soluble fibre such as oat bran, psyllium, barley, legumes, whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
6. Bake, poach, broil, grill, roast, and barbeque food more often.
7. Read food labels carefully to choose foods lower in saturated and trans fat.

Recommended Foods	Foods to Limit
<u>Meat & Alternatives</u> Fish, fatty fish (salmon, sardines, and mackerel) Lean cuts of meat, trim visible fat Skinless chicken or turkey Peas, beans, and lentils Eggs whites or substitutes Soy based meat alternatives including tofu and textured vegetable protein (TVP)	<u>Meat & Alternatives</u> Deep fried chicken wings or battered fish Meat with visible fat Chicken or turkey with skin Organ meats: liver, kidney Regular luncheon meat, bacon, sausage or hot dogs
<u>Vegetables & Fruits</u> All, except coconut and battered or deep fried vegetables	<u>Vegetables & Fruits</u> Coconut Battered or deep fried vegetables
<u>Grain Products</u> Whole grain breads, cereals, pasta, and rice Low fat snack foods such as air popped popcorn and low sodium pretzels	<u>Grain Products</u> Commercial baked goods such as cakes, pies, donuts, and croissants High fat snack foods such as potato chips and cheesies
<u>Fats & Oils</u> Soft, non-hydrogenated margarine Olive, canola, soybean, peanut, and other vegetable oils Salad dressings such as oil and vinegar	<u>Fats & Oils</u> Regular sauces and gravies Cream cheese, creamy salad dressings, and full fat mayo Butter, cream, lard, and shortening Coconut or palm oil

***Special Note for Milk & Alternatives:**

Incorporate a variety of milk and alternatives foods in your diet such as milk, yogurt, cheese, milk alternatives, and cottage cheese.

Healthy eating is only a piece of heart health. Aim to make healthy lifestyle choices by including physical activity, being smoke free, getting adequate rest, and taking all medications as prescribed.