






Eating well with high cholesterol

Where to start

Did you know that poor diet is a leading cause of coronary heart disease? Healthy eating is not about “good” and “bad” foods or restrictive diets. It’s about making small changes that you can continue long term.





The 5 key parts of a heart healthy eating pattern are to eat:

-  1. Plenty of vegetables, fruits and wholegrains
-  2. A variety of healthy protein sources especially fish and seafood, legumes (such as beans and lentils), nuts and seeds. Smaller amounts of eggs and lean poultry can be included in a heart healthy diet. If choosing red meat, make sure the meat is lean and limit to 1-3 times a week
-  3. Unflavoured milk, yoghurt and cheese. Those with high blood cholesterol should choose reduced fat varieties
-  4. Healthy fat choices with nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and their oils for cooking
-  5. Herbs and spices to flavour foods, instead of adding salt

This way of eating is naturally low in unhealthy fats, salt and added sugar and rich in wholegrains, fibre, vitamins and healthy fats. Eating this way can help reduce your chances of getting heart disease in the future.

What are “healthy” fats?

Replacing unhealthy fats (saturated and trans fats) with healthy fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats) will help reduce your risk of heart disease. Healthy fats help to lower bad (LDL) cholesterol and increase good (HDL) cholesterol.

-  Choose olive, canola, safflower and sunflower oils. These oils are better for heart health than coconut oil, ghee, butter and cottonseed oil.
-  Unhealthy foods (such as cakes, biscuits, pastries, pizza and pies) are high in unhealthy saturated fats. Choose home cooked foods instead.
-  Aim for 2 -3 serves of fish a week, especially oily fish like salmon and tuna.
-  Have a small handful of unsalted nuts and seeds every day. Add them to salads, meals and cereals.

What about foods fortified with sterols?

Plant sterols are naturally occurring substances which help lower your cholesterol levels. They can be found in small amounts, in foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains.

Plant sterols are also added to some food products in Australia. Some common products with added plant sterols are shown below. Check the food label to see what the recommended serving size is per day.

Margarine • Milk



Yoghurt • Breakfast cereal

What about fish oil supplements?

Most people do not need fish oil supplements, especially if you are eating fish. Fish oil does not replace a healthy diet and medication. However, if you have high triglycerides (a type of fat in the blood) or existing heart disease they may be beneficial. Check with your doctor first as fish oil supplements may interact with other medications you are taking.

Top 5 tips

1. Aim for 5 servings of vegetables a day. Use veggies as snacks or add them to salads, soups and casseroles.
2. Aim for 2-3 servings of fish a week. Fresh or canned fish in springwater or olive oil are all healthy choices; just avoid those canned in brine.
3. Try introducing at least one meat-free day a week. Eat more legumes like lentils, chickpeas and beans, using either dried and cooked or canned varieties. You can find lots of quick and tasty meat-free recipes For quick and tasty meat-free recipes visit: heartfoundation.org.au/recipes
4. Trim all the fat you can see off meat, remove skin from chicken and avoid processed meat (like sausages, ham and salami).
5. Go for the grain. Replace white bread and rice with wholegrain and seeded breads, brown rice and high fibre breakfast cereals.



Heart healthy changes I can make now

Making small changes daily adds up over time. It can be helpful to focus on **2 or 3 changes at a time**. Take note below on the changes you are going to start with.

1:

2:

3:

For more information

- For more information on healthy eating visit heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating
- For recipes heartfoundation.org.au/recipes
- To speak to a health professional, call the **Heart Foundation Helpline** on **13 11 12**
- To find a dietitian in your area visit daa.asn.au
- To find a walking group near you visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au

Terms of use: This material has been developed by the National Heart Foundation of Australia (Heart Foundation) for general information and educational purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have, or suspect you have, a health problem. The information provided is based on evidence available at the time of publication. Please refer to the Heart Foundation website at www.heartfoundation.org.au for Terms of Use.

©2019 National Heart Foundation of Australia ABN 98 008 419 761



December 2019

HH-SCPS-0020.1.0120