Heart-Healthy Diet Guidelines

Eating a healthy diet can help lower your cholesterol and help reduce the risk of heart disease. Experts recommend the following general lifestyle and diet guidelines:

- Reduce your intake of saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol
- Consume mostly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat food sources such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils
- Add foods to your diet that can enhance LDL-cholesterol-lowering such as plant sterols and soluble fiber
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Increase regular physical activity

Use the following chart to help you make heart-healthy choices¹.

FOOD ITEMS	CHOOSE MORE OFTEN	CHOOSE LESS OFTEN
Breads and Cereals At least 6 servings per day, adjusted to caloric needs	Breads, cereals, especially whole grain; pasta; rice; potatoes; dry beans and peas; low-fat crackers and cookies	Many bakery products, including doughnuts, biscuits, butter rolls, muffins, croissants, sweet rolls, danishes, cakes, pies, coffee cakes, cookies
Vegetables 3-5 servings per day	Fresh, frozen, or canned, without added fat, sauce, or salt	Vegetables fried or prepared with butter, cheese, or cream sauce
Fruits 2-4 servings per day	Fresh, frozen, canned, dried	Fruits fried or served with butter or cream, or in heavy syrup
Dairy Products 2-3 servings per day	Fat-free, 1/2%, 1% milk, butter- milk, yogurt, cottage cheese; fat-free and low-fat cheese	Whole milk, 2% milk, whole milk yogurt, ice cream, cream, cheese
Eggs no more than 2 egg yolks per week	Egg whites or egg substitutes	Egg yolks, whole eggs
Meat, Poultry, Fish No more than 5 oz per day	Lean cuts loin, leg, round; extra lean hamburger; cold cuts made with lean meat or soy protein; skinless poultry; fish	Higher fat meat cuts: ribs, T-bone steak, regular hamburger, bacon, sausage; cold cuts: salami, bologna; hot dogs; organ meats: liver, brains, sweetbreads; poultry with skin; fried meat; fried poultry; fried fish
Fats and Oils Amount adjusted to caloric level	Unsaturated oils; soft or liquid margarines and vegetable oil spreads, salad dressings, seeds, and nuts	Butter, shortening, stick margarine, chocolate, coconut
Therapeutic Lifestyle Change Diet Options	Stanol/sterol-containing margarines; viscous fiber food sources: barley, oats, psyllium, apples, bananas, berries, citrus fruits, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, broccoli, brussels sprouts, carrots, dry beans, peas, soy products (tofu, miso)	

1 National Cholesterol Education Program. Third report of the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Final Report. 2002. Available at: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol/index.htm. Accessed on: 12/16/2008





Heart-Healthy Tips

- Remove all skin and visible fat from meat
- Use low-fat or fat-free dairy products
- Boil, poach, steam, broil, roast, bake or grill instead of frying
- When eating out order dressings, sauces and gravies on the side
- Season foods with lemon, herbs and spices instead of salt
- Read nutrition labels and look for products with "0" grams of trans fat per serving
- Replace butter with a soft spread