



### DIET GUIDELINES FOR A HEALTHY HEART

#### Patient Information

These guidelines offer a brief summary of three diets for a healthy heart. If your doctor has prescribed one of these diets for you, you need more complete information. The American Heart Association has free pamphlets available that explain the low-cholesterol and low-sodium diets in detail.

#### Reading labels

Labels on packaged foods make it easier to select healthier products, but you must understand how to interpret them. If the product makes any nutritional claim, the label lists two categories of information. "**Nutritional information per serving**" lists the amount of calories, protein, carbohydrates, fat, and sodium (salt) in one serving. It also tells you how much is considered *one serving*, which can be confusing. For example, one normal serving of milk is 1 cup, or 8 ounces. If you pour milk into a tall drinking glass, however, you may have 10 - 16 ounces.

The second category is "**Percentage of U.S. recommended daily allowances (U.S. RDA)**" for protein, vitamins, and minerals in each serving. Remember that these numbers are percentages, so if the label on a milk carton says "Protein 20", this means that 1 cup provides 20% of the protein you need each day.

Packaged foods that do not claim to provide nutrition do not have these labels, but they do list the ingredients. The largest quantity is listed first and the smallest amount last. For example, a jar of sweet pickles lists the ingredients as "Cucumbers, water, corn syrup, vinegar, peppers, salt, natural and artificial flavors, preservatives, and artificial coloring." This tells you that cucumbers are the main ingredient, water the next highest ingredient, and so forth.

Of course, fresh meats, fish and seafood, fruits, and vegetables do not carry labels. You need to learn which ones are the best for your diet and which ones to avoid.

#### Low-cholesterol diet

The average American consumes a large amount of cholesterol every day: men about 500 mg and women about 320 mg. A low-cholesterol diet limits cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg. a day. To manage this, only 30% (or less) of the total calories you eat every day should come from fat. In addition, most of this fat should come from **polyunsaturated fat**, the "good" fat that helps lower blood cholesterol.

How can you tell the difference between "good" and "bad" fat? Polyunsaturated oil is usually liquid and comes from vegetables such as corn, cottonseed, soybean, sunflower, and safflower. Peanut, canola, and olive oil are **monounsaturated fats** that are neutral and do not add cholesterol. The "bad" fats are **saturated fats**, which harden at room temperature and are found in meat, dairy products made from whole milk or cream, solid and hydrogenated shortening, coconut oil, palm oil, and cocoa butter.

Here are some tips for avoiding too much saturated fat:

1. Eat less meat. Adults need about 5 - 7 ounces of meat, poultry, fish, or seafood a day.
2. Avoid "prime grade" or heavily marbled meats. corned beef, pastrami, regular ground beef, frankfurters, sausage, bacon, lunch meats, goose, duck, or organ meats. Select very lean cuts of meat. Trim skin off chicken and turkey.
3. Avoid fried meat, chicken, fish, or seafood. Use a rack to drain off fat when broiling, baking, or roasting.
4. Eat no more than two whole eggs (yolks and whites) each week. (Egg whites are allowed, since they contain little cholesterol.)
5. Avoid dairy products containing more than 1% milk fat, such as butter, sour cream, cream cheese, creamed cottage cheese, and most natural and processed cheeses. Select milk products that contain only up to 1% milk fat. Use polyunsaturated margarine.

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6. Avoid packaged foods or bakery items that contain egg yolks, whole milk, saturated fats, cream sauces, or butter. Select only those that have a low-cholesterol rating.
7. Avoid cashews, coconut, pistachios, and macadamia nuts. Most other types of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds are low in cholesterol.

#### **Low-sodium diet**

The average American consumes about 1 - 2 teaspoons of salt every day, 6 - 18 grams, and most of this salt is added at the table. Your body needs only about .5 gms of salt a day. Since most foods that come from animals (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk) are naturally high in sodium, your body's requirements are easily met without adding salt to your food.

What is the difference between salt and sodium?

Sodium keeps the right amount of water in your body, so some is necessary for good health. However, too much sodium causes water retention, which raises your blood pressure.

It may take a little time to get used to a low-sodium diet, particularly if you are accustomed to eating highly salted foods. Start by eliminating salt from the table. Use spices and herbs that contain no sodium to add flavor, and try some of the new salt substitutes that contain no sodium.

Many packaged and processed foods are now marketed as low sodium, including cheeses, luncheon meats, canned and packaged food, and even snacks such as potato chips. However, beware if the package reads "reduced sodium"; the sodium content may still be too high. If you are not sure of a product, read the ingredients carefully and look for the words "salt, sodium, soda, baking powder, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and disodium phosphate". If you are still in doubt, do not eat it.

Here are some tips for eliminating the "hidden" sodium from your diet:

1. Avoid cured or smoked meat, poultry, or fish. These include ham, bacon, corned beef, regular luncheon meats, sausage, commercially frozen fish, canned fish packed in oil or brine, and canned shellfish.
2. Avoid frozen, canned, and dehydrated main dish foods such as pizza, TV dinners, spaghetti, chili, stews, and soups.
3. Avoid canned vegetables and vegetable juices.

4. Avoid cheese, buttermilk, and cocoa mixes.
5. Avoid commercial sauces (catsup, chili sauce, steak sauce, soy sauce), mayonnaise, salad dressing, olives, pickles, meat tenderizers, and seasoning salts.

#### **Low-calorie diet**

Losing weight (or keeping weight off) is an important part of controlling blood pressure and reducing blood cholesterol levels. Your doctor, a dietitian, or a nutritionalist can advise you about calories, since this depends on how active you are, your height, and your physical condition.

The low-cholesterol diet is an excellent basis for a weight loss program. Fats are high in calories, and the low-cholesterol diet is essentially a low-fat diet. For example, 1 cup of whole milk contains 150 calories, but the same amount of skim milk has only 86 calories. Also, because it emphasizes fresh fruits and vegetables and discourages processed foods, the low-cholesterol diet is nutritionally well balanced.

Weight loss should be gradual. Remember: it probably took you several years to put the pounds on, so expect it to take several months to lose them.

Here are some other tips for helping you lose weight:

1. Divide your daily calorie allowance into several small meals each day, instead of eating one or two large meals.
2. For between-meal snacks, choose high-fiber, low-calorie foods such as apples or celery. High-fiber foods make your stomach feel full quicker.
3. For between-meal hunger pangs, fool your stomach with a glass of ice water, hot tea, or calorie-free soda.
4. If you eat when you are bored, busy yourself to take your mind off food. Change your activity - do something you enjoy, take a walk, or take a shower.
5. If you eat when you are "blue", try the "buddy system" with a dieting friend. Agree to call each other for help whenever you are tempted to indulge.
6. Regular exercise that burns calories (walking, jogging, swimming, etc.) is the magic ingredient in many people's exercise programs. Check with your doctor first about the safest program for you.
7. "Too good to be true" weight loss programs are just that - they are either worthless or dangerous. Follow a diet that has been medically recommended and skip the "fad" diets.