



Heart-Healthy Guidelines

This handout gives guidelines from the American Heart Association on how to live a heart-healthy lifestyle. Follow these tips to make healthy choices about eating and exercise and help reduce your risk for heart disease.

Eat Plenty of Fruits, Vegetables, and Whole Grains

Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains contain *antioxidants*, *phytochemicals*, vitamins, and minerals. All of these will help keep you healthy and prevent disease. These foods also contain fiber, which keeps your digestive tract healthy and can help keep your cholesterol under control.

- Eat at least 5 servings of whole fruits and vegetables every day.
- Choose fresh produce in a variety of colors for greatest health benefits.
- Limit refined and processed foods such as white breads and crackers, white rice, sugar, and potato chips.

Increase Your Physical Activity

Physical activity will help with weight loss and reduce your risk of heart disease. If you are overweight, losing 10% of your body weight can lower your cholesterol and blood pressure.

- Do 30 minutes of some kind of activity every day.
- Spend less time sitting, watching television, or playing computer games.
- To get started on an exercise program:
 - Set a goal.
 - Use a pedometer to see how far you walk each day.
 - Make daily exercise a priority.

Limit “Bad” Fats

Saturated fats and *trans fatty acids* are called “bad” fats. They can increase cholesterol, which clogs *arteries* (blood vessels).

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Questions? Make an appointment with a dietitian to make a diet plan that is right for you.

Saturated Fats

Saturated fats are found in animal products such as meat and dairy (see “Food Sources of Fats” below). Limit saturated fats to no more than 7% of your daily calorie intake. If you eat:

- 1,200 calories a day, limit your intake to 9 grams of saturated fat.
- 1,500 calories a day, limit your intake to 11.5 grams of saturated fat.
- 2,000 calories a day, limit your intake to 15 grams of saturated fat.

Trans Fatty Acids

Trans fatty acids are found in processed foods (see “Food Sources of Fats” below). It is best to avoid these fats. Always check nutrition labels for trans fats.

Eat “Good” Fats

To help you get more healthy fats in your diet:

- Replace butter, margarine, and shortening with oils such as olive and canola oil. These oils contain *mono-* and *polyunsaturated* fats.
- *Omega-3 fatty acids* actually help lower your bad LDL cholesterol and raise your good HDL cholesterol. Omega-3 fats are found in fish, flax seeds, walnuts, and other foods (see “Food Sources of Fats” below).
- Eat 2 servings of fish or fish oil a week. If you have heart disease, then 1 gram daily is advised. If your cholesterol is high, then 2 to 4 grams daily are recommended.

Food Sources of Fats

This table shows the number of fat grams in 1 serving of these foods:

Omega-3 Fats	Saturated Fats	Trans Fats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flaxseed (3.5 g)• Walnuts (2.3 g)• Salmon (2.1 g)• Trout (1.7 to 2 g)• Soybeans (1 g)• Fish oil supplement (1.1 g)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Butter (7 g)• Cheese (6 g)• Ground beef (4.5 g)• Pork loin (4 g)• 2% milk (3 g)• Doughnut (2.5 g)• Chicken breast (1.5 g)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• French fries (8 g)• Doughnut (5 g)• Cake (4.5 g)• Shortening (4 g)• Crackers (3 g)• Margarine (3 g)• Potato chips (3 g)• Candy bar (3 g)

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Dietitian/Diet
Technician:

Limit Added Sugars and Sodium

- Reduce sodium to 2,300 milligrams (mg) daily to help to lower your blood pressure.
- Remember to read food labels. Sodium (salt) is high in processed foods such as frozen dinners or canned items.
- Sugars in sweetened products like candy, soda, and bakery items add a lot of calories and no nutrients to your diet. These foods contribute to weight gain. They can even increase your triglycerides and lower your HDL, since your body turns extra sugar into fats.

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