

Healthy eating and drinking

Healthy eating and drinking is an important part of looking after your health. Here are some easy tips to help you to follow a healthy balanced diet.

Food

Variety

- Eat a variety of foods, including vegetables; wholegrains; lean meats; oily fish; fruit; low, reduced or no fat dairy; and vegetable and seed oils. Remember to also include nuts, seeds and legumes.

Plant-based foods

- Make plant-based foods the main part of each meal. Include vegetables, wholegrains, fruit, nuts and seeds every day.
 - Include five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit every day.
 - Choose wholegrain breads and breakfast cereals, and include pasta, noodles and rice.
 - Try to include legumes and pulses in at least two meals a week. Legumes and pulses include canned beans (e.g. baked beans, kidney beans and three bean mix), dried peas (e.g. split peas), dried beans (e.g. butter beans and broad beans), chickpeas or lentils.

Fats and oils

1. Fats are an important part of a healthy balanced diet and you should not exclude them. However the **type** of fats you include in your diet is important. Choosing the healthier unsaturated fats instead of saturated and trans fats will reduce your risk of heart disease.
 - Use spreads and margarines made from canola, sunflower or olive oil and dairy blends that have earned the Heart Foundation Tick instead of butter. You can use other foods, such as avocado or hummus, as an alternative to spreads and margarines two to three times a week.
 - Choose from a variety of vegetable and seed oils when you are preparing food. Healthier choices include canola, sunflower, soybean, olive, sesame and peanut oils.
 - Use salad dressings and mayonnaise made from canola, sunflower, soybean, olive, sesame and peanut oils.
 - Eat two to three serves of oily fish a week. A serving size of fish is 150 grams or approximately the size of your whole hand. Use fish oil capsules and omega-3 enriched foods and drinks to supplement your intake of omega-3 fats.
 - Select lean meat and poultry (meat trimmed of all visible fat and chicken without skin). Try to limit processed meats (e.g. sausages) and deli meats (e.g. salami). Choose deli meats that have earned the Heart Foundation Tick where available. Limit foods such as liver, kidneys and pâté.
 - Try to limit take-away foods, such as pastries, pies, pizza, fried fish, hamburgers, hot chips and creamy pasta dishes to once a week. Healthier take-away choices include sushi or sashimi, Asian stir-fries, tomato-based pasta dishes, grilled fish, chicken and lean meat.
2. Blood cholesterol levels are more influenced by the saturated and trans fat we eat than the cholesterol in foods. Therefore it is alright to include eggs as part of a healthy balanced diet.

- A healthy balanced diet can include a serve of eggs (two eggs) in two to three meals a week.
3. An easy way to reduce saturated and trans fat intake is to choose reduced, low or no fat dairy foods or 'calcium added' non-dairy foods every day.
- Consume reduced, low or no fat milk, yoghurt, custard and desserts.
 - Include small portions of cheese (one to two slices or 20–40 grams) up to four times a week. Lower fat cheeses, such as light tasty cheddar, ricotta, cottage and light mozzarella, are healthier choices.
 - A healthy balanced diet can include a serve of plain ice cream (1½ scoops or 50 grams) up to three times a week. Lower fat plain varieties are healthier choices.

Salt

- It's better not to add salt to food. If you want to add flavour use herbs and spices. When shopping choose foods labelled 'no added salt', 'low salt' or 'salt reduced' where possible.

Snacks

- Healthy snacks include sliced raw vegetables with hommus, a piece of fresh fruit, a handful of dried fruit, up to a cup of canned fruit or a handful (30 grams) of plain, unsalted nuts. Other choices can be rice cakes and non-confectionery bars, such plain nut bars, seed bars and cereal bars that have earned the Heart Foundation Tick.
- Try to limit sugary, fatty and salty snack foods, such as crisps, cakes, pastries, biscuits, lollies and chocolate, to once a week.

Drinks

- Choose mainly water to drink.
- A small glass of fruit or vegetable juice can be consumed occasionally, but should not replace water.
- Limit sugary drinks, such as soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit juice drinks and cordials.
- Drink coffee (regular or decaffeinated) and tea in moderation. If you use milk, choose reduced, low or no fat milk.
- If you drink alcohol, have no more than two standard drinks a day.

Want to know more?

For more information on healthy eating and drinking, call our Health Information Service on 1300 36 27 87 (for the cost of a local call) or email health@heartfoundation.org.au.

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