

Protect Your Heart: Choose Healthy Fats

Why should I choose healthy fats?

Diabetes raises your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke. But you can protect your heart and blood vessels by choosing fats wisely. Some kinds of fat, such as butter and shortening, can raise your cholesterol and your chances of heart disease. Other kinds, like olive oil and nuts, protect your heart.

All fats are high in calories. If you're trying to lose weight, you'll want to keep your portions small. Take a look at the Nutrition Facts on food packages. You'll see information about the types and amounts of fat in each food.



You can protect your heart and blood vessels by eating less trans fat, saturated fat and cholesterol.

Special information about fats for people with diabetes

If you have diabetes, limit how much you have of these fats:

- trans fat (found in some snacks, cookies, pies, and other foods)
- saturated fat (found in whole milk products, fatty meats, dark meats, and skin)

Your health care provider can tell you exactly how much of these fats is safe for you.

How can I choose healthy fats?

Try these steps to protect your heart and blood vessels:

- Eat less foods high in saturated fat and trans fat. Instead eat foods with healthy fats.
- Cut back on foods that are high in cholesterol.

Step 1: Eat less saturated fat and trans fat

Saturated fat and trans fat raise your chances of heart disease and stroke. These fats can raise your blood cholesterol and can cause your blood vessels to clog. The blood supply to your heart can get blocked, leading to a heart attack. If the blood supply to your brain gets blocked, you can have a stroke.

Saturated fat: Saturated fat can raise your cholesterol level.

Sources of saturated fat

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bacon and bacon grease • butter • chitterlings • chocolate • coconut, coconut oil, and coconut milk • cream cheese • cream sauce • fatback and salt pork • gravy made with meat drippings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-fat dairy products, such as cheese, cream, ice cream, whole milk, 2% milk, and sour cream • high-fat meats like regular ground beef, bologna, hot dogs, sausage, and spareribs • lard and shortening • palm oil and palm kernel oil • poultry skin |
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Trans fats: Trans fats can also raise your cholesterol level.

Sources of trans fat

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foods with hydrogenated oil • foods with partially hydrogenated oil • shortening • some fast foods such as French fries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some snacks • some stick margarines • some store-bought desserts (cookies, donuts, pies) |
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Step 2: Cut back on foods that are high in cholesterol

Your body makes some of the cholesterol in your blood. The rest comes from the foods you eat. Foods from animals are the main sources of dietary cholesterol.

Your body needs cholesterol to make some hormones, vitamins, and to help you digest foods. However, if you eat too much cholesterol, it may put you at risk for heart attack or stroke.

Sources of cholesterol	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • egg yolks • high-fat dairy products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-fat meat and poultry • liver and other organ meats

Step 3: Choose fats that can help lower your bad (LDL) cholesterol

Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats can protect your heart by lowering your cholesterol. Another protective fat, called omega-3 fats, is found in some types of fish, oils, and other foods.

Monounsaturated fat: Monounsaturated fat is a type of unsaturated fat that can lower your blood cholesterol.

Sources of monounsaturated fat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avocado • canola oil • olive oil and olives • sesame seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nuts like almonds, cashews, pecans, peanuts, and walnuts • peanut butter and peanut oil

Polyunsaturated fat: Polyunsaturated fat, another type of unsaturated fat, protects your heart.

Sources of polyunsaturated fat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corn oil • cottonseed oil • flaxseeds • mayonnaise • pumpkin seeds • safflower oil • salad dressings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sesame seeds • soft (tub) margarine • sunflower oil • sunflower seeds • tahini or sesame paste • walnuts

Omega-3 fats: This type of fat helps prevent clogging of the arteries. Eat fish 2 or 3 times a week. Choose broiling, baking, grilling, or steaming. Or buy tuna packed in water and make tuna fish salad with low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise.

Sources of omega-3 fats	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • albacore tuna • herring • mackerel • rainbow trout • salmon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sardines • canola oil • flaxseeds • soybean oil • walnuts

Special cholesterol-lowering margarine: Having 2 to 3 tablespoons of a cholesterol-lowering margarine every day can lower your cholesterol. These margarines contain plant stanol esters, an ingredient that keeps cholesterol from being absorbed. You'll find several types at the grocery store in the margarine section.

Protect Your Heart


By following these three steps, you can help protect your heart and lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.

For more help, ask your health care team for copies of these brochures:

- Toolkit No. 8: *Protect Your Heart: Make Smart Food Choices*
- Toolkit No. 10: *Protect Your Heart: Plan and Cook Heart-Healthy Meals*
- Toolkit No. 11: *Protect Your Heart: Check Food Labels to Make Heart-Healthy Choices*



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