

Healthy eating for a healthy heart
Eating well to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease



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This booklet gives advice about healthy eating to help protect your heart. It is not intended to replace information given to you by your doctor or any of our staff. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding this leaflet or any of our services.

Introduction

Eating healthily is one way of keeping your heart healthy. Following a healthy diet and lifestyle can reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease, and can increase your chances of survival following a heart attack.

Following a healthy diet can help to:

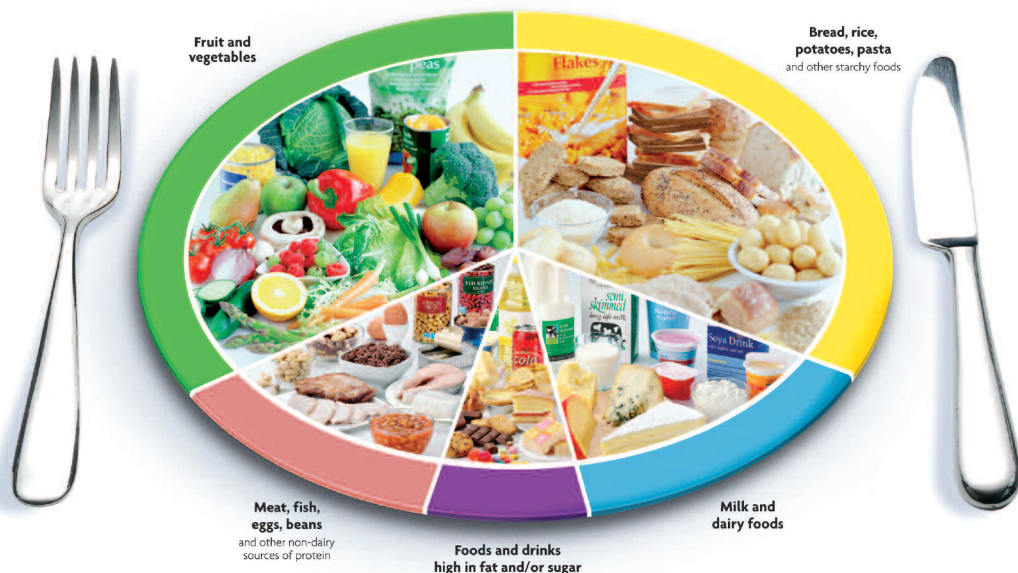
- **Achieve a healthy weight;**
- **Reduce cholesterol;**
- **Reduce blood pressure;**
- **Prevent build up of fatty deposits (atheroma) in arteries;**
- **Prevent blood clots or thrombosis, and**
- **Improve the control of blood glucose levels.**

Good advice for people who want to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease is to follow a 'Mediterranean diet'. This basically means eating lots of fruit and vegetables, more fish and healthy fats, and eating less meat, dairy and processed foods.

This type of diet is sometimes also called a cardioprotective diet: one which helps to protect your heart.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



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Examples of portion sizes:

- three heaped tablespoons of vegetables;
- three heaped tablespoons of beans and pulses;
- a cereal bowl of mixed salad;
- an apple, orange, pear or banana, or
- two small fruits, such as satsumas, plums or kiwis.

Antioxidants work by 'mopping up' free radicals. Free radicals are produced in the body and can damage arteries, which can lead to heart disease. Vitamins A, C, E, selenium and flavonoids are all antioxidants.

Fibre is the indigestible part of fruits, vegetables, cereals, beans and pulses. Some researchers have found that soluble fibre (found in beans, pulses, lentils and oats) can lower blood cholesterol levels.

The eatwell plate

The eatwell plate, pictured above, makes healthy eating easier to understand. It shows the groups and proportions of foods we need in order to maintain a healthy and balanced diet.

Use the eatwell plate as a guide when planning what to eat and drink each day.

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are high in vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants. Aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. This includes fresh, frozen, tinned and dried fruit and vegetables. Fruit juice only counts as one portion, regardless of how much you drink. Try to have a variety, including different colours, of fruit and vegetables in your diet.

The recommended daily intake of fibre is 18 grammes. Five portions of fruit and vegetables can provide up to 24 grammes of fibre.

Oily fish

Omega-3 is a type of fat found in oily fish and may protect against heart disease as part of a healthy balanced diet.

Omega-3 can help your heart by:

- making your blood less likely to clot;
- lowering your blood pressure; and
- lowering your blood fat levels.

You should aim for two portions of fish a week, one of which should be an oily fish. If you have had a heart attack, aim for at least two portions of oily fish a week. One portion is 4 to 6 ounces, or between 100 and 150 grammes.

Good sources of Omega-3 are sardines, mackerel, salmon, pilchards, trout, herring, kippers and fresh tuna. However, tuna that is canned is not a good source of Omega-3.

If you're buying canned fish, be sure to drain the brine or oil thoroughly. It is better to buy fish canned in spring water or tomato sauce which will contain less fat or salt.

If you have had a heart attack and can't eat oily fish, you should take a fish body oil supplement. Fish body oil is different from cod liver oil as it is made from the body of the fish. Look for a supplement that provides one gramme of fish oil a day. Ask your pharmacist or GP for more advice.





Salt

Most people eat far too much salt. The national guideline is to aim for less than 6 grammes of salt each day. The average person in the UK has 9.5 grammes per day. About three quarters of this comes from processed or manufactured foods. Foods that come in tins and jars, as well as smoked or pickled foods, are particularly high in salt.

Everyone should try to cut down on the amount of salt in their diet. However, this is especially important when you have heart disease, particularly if you have high blood pressure.

Please check the labels on your food to find out how much salt they contain, and remember that salt is also sometimes called sodium chloride on labels.

As a guide, food is high in salt if it has 1.5 grammes or more of salt per 100 grammes. It is low in salt if it has 0.3 grammes or less of salt per 100 grammes.

Cutting down on the amount of salt added to your food may alter its taste. Try reducing it down before cutting it out altogether, so that you are more likely to stick to your salt reduction. Over time, you should find that you adapt to the taste of less salt.

Please do not use salt alternatives, such as LoSalt or Solo. These are very high in potassium and for some people this may cause their heart to beat too fast. Instead, try to use herbs, spices, extra pepper, vinegar, mustard, garlic, chilli or lemon juice to flavour your food.

Healthy fats

The type of fat in your diet is important because it affects the cholesterol in your blood. Our bodies do need some cholesterol. However, too much bad cholesterol in the blood can lead to blocked arteries (atheroma).

LDL cholesterol is the bad type of cholesterol because it damages your arteries.

HDL cholesterol is the good type of cholesterol because it removes the harmful LDL cholesterol from the blood.

To help achieve the right levels of good and bad cholesterol in your blood, you should reduce saturated fat and moderate polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats in your diet.

Below is a guide to the fats and where you'll find them.

Saturated fats

- Increase the level of LDL cholesterol in the blood
- Found in butter, ghee, meat fat and lard
- Hidden in snack foods such as biscuits, crisps and cakes

Polyunsaturated fats

- Lower the level of LDL cholesterol in the blood
- Also lower the level of HDL cholesterol in the blood
- Found in fish oils, corn oil, groundnut oil, sunflower oil, safflower oils, soya, and margarines made from these oils

Monounsaturated fats

- Lower the level of LDL cholesterol in the blood
- Do not lower the level of HDL cholesterol in the blood
- These are the type of fats that are best for your heart
- Found in olive oil, rapeseed oil, groundnut oil, walnut oil, avocado oil, and margarines made from these oils

Weight loss

If you are overweight, it is a good idea to try to lose weight. Try to have realistic goals. Aim to lose 1 to 2 lbs a week and please weigh yourself once a week.

Try to make realistic, long-term changes. Drastic changes and rapid weight loss will be difficult to maintain.

If you feel you're not losing weight, it may be worth keeping a food diary. This can make you more aware of what you are eating.

Helpful tips to lose weight:

- **Have regular meals.** Try to eat three meals a day. This will stop you from feeling hungry during the day and will mean that you are less likely to snack on high calorie food. Missing meals can slow down your metabolism and make it more difficult to lose weight.
- **Eat a balanced diet** (see the eatwell plate on page 4). Include lots of fruit and vegetables, as these are low in calories and filling. Include protein at each meal to keep yourself feeling full.
- **Limit high calorie foods** such as fat, sugar (including sugary drinks) and alcohol in your diet.

The glycaemic index, or GI, is a ranking of starchy foods based on the rate at which they raise blood glucose levels. Having foods that are low GI may help weight loss by helping to control hunger levels and keeping you feeling fuller for longer. However, it is only effective as part of a calorie controlled diet.

If you would like further help with your weight loss, ask your consultant to refer you to a dietitian.

Contact us

If you would like more information about healthy eating for a healthy heart, or advice on recommended lifestyle changes, please call **02031 315 384** or email: privatepatients@rbht.nhs.uk to book an appointment with a specialist nurse and/or dietician.

Glycaemic index (GI) of various foods

Breakfast Cereal

Low GI	
All-bran (UK/Aus)	30
All-bran (US)	50
Oat bran	50
Rolled Oats	51
Special K (UK/Aus)	54
Natural Muesli	40
Porridge	58

Medium GI

Bran Buds	58
Mini Wheats	58
Nutrigrain	66
Shredded Wheat	67
Porridge Oats	63
Special K (US)	69

High GI

Cornflakes	80
Sultana Bran	73
Branflakes	74
Coco Pops	77
Puffed Wheat	80
Oats in Honey Bake	77
Team	82
Total	76
Cheerios	74
Rice Krispies	82
Weetabix	74

Staples

Low GI	
Wheat Pasta Shapes	54
New Potatoes	54
Meat Ravioli	39
Spaghetti	32
Tortellini (Cheese)	50
Egg Fettuccini	32
Brown Rice	50
Buckwheat	51
White long grain rice	50
Pearled Barley	22
Yam	35
Sweet Potatoes	48
Instant Noodles	47
Wheat tortilla	30

Medium GI

Basmati Rice	58
Couscous	61
Cornmeal	68
Taco Shells	68
Gnocchi	68
Canned Potatoes	61
Chinese (Rice) Vermicelli	58
Baked Potatoes	60
Wild Rice	57

High GI

Instant White Rice	87
Glutinous Rice	86
Short Grain White Rice	83
Tapioca	70
Fresh Mashed Potatoes	73
French Fries	75
Instant Mashed Potatoes	80

Bread

Low GI	
Soya and Linseed	36
Wholegrain Pumpernickel	46
Heavy Mixed Grain	45
Whole Wheat	49
Sourdough Rye	48
Sourdough Wheat	54

Medium GI

Croissant	67
Hamburger bun	61
Pita, white	57
Wholemeal Rye	62

High GI

White	71
Bagel	72
French Baguette	95

Snacks & Sweet Foods

Low GI	
Slim-Fast meal replacement	27
Snickers Bar (high fat)	41
Nut & Seed Muesli Bar	49
Sponge Cake	46
Nutella	33
Milk Chocolate	42
Hummus	6
Peanuts	13
Walnuts	15
Cashew Nuts	25
Nuts and Raisins	21
Jam	51
Corn Chips	42
Oatmeal Crackers	55

Medium GI

Ryvita	63
Digestives	59
Blueberry muffin	59
Honey	58

Legumes (Beans)

Low GI	
Kidney Beans (canned)	52
Butter Beans	36
Chick Peas	42
Haricot/Navy Beans	31
Lentils, Red	21
Lentils, Green	30
Pinto Beans	45
Blackeyed Beans	50
Yellow Split Peas	32

Medium GI

Beans in Tomato Sauce	56
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Vegetables

Low GI	
Frozen Green Peas	39
Frozen Sweet Corn	47
Raw Carrots	16
Boiled Carrots	41
Eggplant/Aubergine	15
Broccoli	10
Cauliflower	15
Cabbage	10
Mushrooms	10
Tomatoes	15
Chillies	10
Lettuce	10
Green Beans	15
Red Peppers	10
Onions	10

Medium GI

Beetroot	64
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High GI

Pumpkin	75
Parsnips	97

Fruits

Low GI	
Cherries	22
Plums	24
Grapefruit	25
Peaches	28
Peach, canned in natural juice	30
Apples	34
Pears	41
Dried Apricots	32
Grapes	43
Coconut	45
Coconut Milk	41
Kiwi Fruit	47
Oranges	40
Strawberries	40
Prunes	29

Medium GI

Mango	60
Sultanas	56
Bananas	58
Raisins	64
Papaya	60
Figs	61
Pineapple	66

High GI

Watermelon	80
Dates	103

Dairy

Low GI	
Whole milk	31
Skimmed milk	32
Chocolate milk	42
Sweetened yoghurt	33
Artificially Sweetened Yoghurt	23
Custard	35
Soy Milk	44

Medium GI

Ice cream	62
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