

## Nutrition

Maintaining healthy food habits is very important and essential in the prevention of heart disease. What you eat and how you prepare food can affect both your cholesterol and blood pressure levels. You can reduce your cholesterol by eating fewer foods that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. You can reduce your blood pressure by eating more fruits and vegetables and less of foods high in sodium. Although changing your diet may seem like a lot of work, you do not have to be on a “special” diet to be eating heart healthy.

### Tips for Making Healthy Dietary Changes:

- Remember that too much of one thing is never a good idea. It is healthier and more enjoyable to eat a variety of foods.
- You do not have to make all necessary dietary changes at once. It may be easier to choose a few things, work on those, and then move on to making other changes. For instance, start with a making your breakfast healthy, and then move onto lunch or dinner.
- Budget what you eat. You can enjoy snacks and sweets (sometimes) if you make sure that most of the time you are making healthy food choices.
- Incorporate family or friends into your new ways of eating and cooking. They might help you remember what to eat and how to prepare food, while also learning, becoming healthier, and having fun themselves.
- Speak to your doctor or a registered dietitian about what you can do to improve your diet.

### When is Enough, Enough?

It is important to be aware of proper portion sizes for different foods. Portion size is an essential component of a good diet. For example, people who are overweight may eat the right things, but too much of them. To help you understand appropriate portion control, try to keep these things in mind:

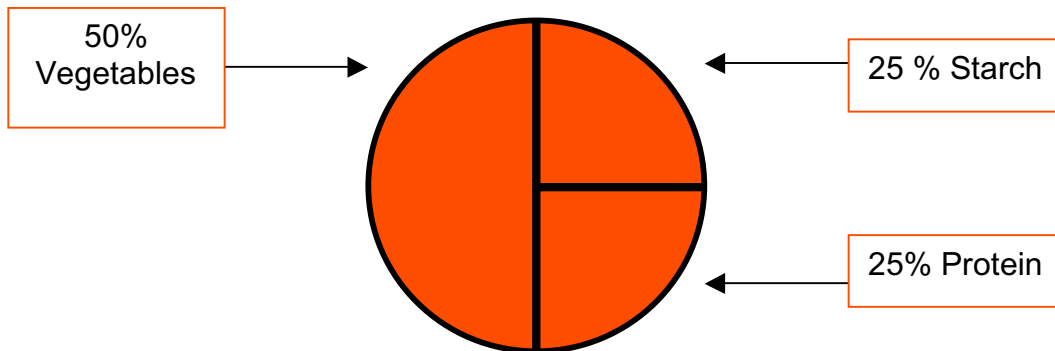
- Your palm size is an accurate estimate of the amount of cooked animal protein you should have in one serving.
- See the chart below to know what your plate should be composed of.

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### What is “good” to eat and *good* to eat?

Believe it or not there are plenty of delicious foods that are also healthy (not too high in cholesterol or saturated fat). Here are a few examples of food choices to reduce your intake of saturated fat:

- Skim milk (instead of whole milk)
- Egg whites (instead of whole eggs)
- Unsalted pretzels or air-popped popcorn w/garlic or chili powder (instead of potato chips or commercial popcorn)
- Low-fat/No fat cheeses (instead of regular cheese)
- Low-fat/No fat yogurt (instead of sour cream)

Also, a few ideas how to make ordinary foods into low-fat extraordinary foods:

- Fruits and vegetables, if you like munching on crunchy snacks, with low fat or fat-free dip (instead of junk food).
- Graham crackers topped with low-fat/fat-free ricotta or cottage cheese (instead of cookies).
- Frozen bananas or grapes (instead of ice cream).

### Practical Guidelines for Healthy Eating

- Lard and butter are high in saturated fat. Use olive oil, canola oil, or low-fat/fat-free vegetable sprays instead.
- Avoid fried foods. Opt for baked, boiled, broiled, grilled, barbequed, steamed, or sautéed foods.
- Look at food ingredients and nutrition facts and compare foods. The lower the saturated fat the better.
- Watch out for clever wording and marketing traps on food products. For example, something labeled as having no cholesterol may still be high in saturated fat and fat-free foods can sometimes be jam-packed with calories.

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- Definitions that are good to know with regard to reading labels:
  - Low fat means  $\leq 3$  grams of fat per serving.
  - Low in saturated fat means  $\leq 1$  gram of saturated fat per serving.
  - Low cholesterol means  $\leq 20$  milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
  - Fat-free or non-fat means  $\leq 0.5$  gram of fat per serving.
  - Reduced fat or lower fat is at least 25% less fat per serving than the original item.
  - Light is at least 33% fewer calories or 50% less fat per serving than the original item.
- Stay away from buying processed foods (microwaveable meals, canned pastas or vegetables) that are high in salt and sugar. This will give you the discretion to add certain low-fat/calorie/cholesterol condiments if necessary.
- Pick lean cuts of meat (eye of round, round tip, top loin, top round, sirloin, and tenderloin).

#### Helpful Hints for Eating Out:

1. Almost everyone likes fast food. More often than not, consider a salad or a plain hamburger. Think twice about ordering anything fried and milkshakes – all of which are high in saturated fat and cholesterol.
2. At salad bars try to avoid anything with dressings already included (potato salad, chicken salad) and ask for the dressing on the side. Low-calorie/fat dressings can be good as well as plain lemon juice or vinegar.
3. Choose pasta dishes with a plain tomato-based sauce instead of a cream-based sauce.
4. If you are unsure of what's in a dish, just ask the waiter.
5. Choose broth-based soups instead of cream-based soups.
6. For your main dish, opt for a simply prepared fish, poultry, or meat. Again, choose a dish that is broiled or grilled if possible. Also, try a heart-healthy appetizer instead of a main dish.
7. Always ask for condiments, seasonings, and sauces on the side.
8. Do not eat until you are stuffed. Rather, eat until you are pleasantly satisfied. If you eat slowly you can better tell when you are satisfied. After all, you do not have to eat everything you are served. Leftovers can make a good lunch for the next day. Always practice portion control.
9. Eat fresh fruit for dessert or share a dessert with others.

#### **Goals:**

- Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables to  $\geq 5$  per day.

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- Increase your intake of fiber to  $\geq 20$  grams per day. Fiber assists in lowering cholesterol levels. Examples of foods higher in fiber include whole wheat bread, prunes, kidney/pinto beans, broccoli, brown rice, oat bran, and apples.
- Reduce your sodium intake to  $< 2,400$  mg per day. This is especially important if you have high blood pressure. Speak to your doctor or dietitian about how important this is for you.
- Increase your intake of fish to at least 2 servings per week. Omega-3 fatty acids found primarily in fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, sardines, and bluefish help to lower cholesterol levels and reduce blood clotting.
- Limit alcohol intake to 1 drink/day for women or 2 drinks/day for men. One drink is equal to 12 oz. of beer, 4 oz. of wine, 1-1/2 oz. of 80-proof spirits or 1 oz. of 100-proof spirits.

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