

How to eat well for a healthy heart



Our heart-healthy eating pattern

A heart-healthy eating pattern is based on a combination of foods chosen regularly over time. The 5 steps of a heart-healthy eating pattern are:



1 Plenty of fruit, vegetables and wholegrain cereals.



2 Healthy proteins especially fish, seafood, legumes, nuts and seeds with smaller amounts of eggs and lean poultry. Limit lean red meat to 1-3 times a week.



3 Unflavoured milk, yoghurt and cheese. People with high blood cholesterol or heart disease should choose reduced fat varieties.



4 Healthy fat choices like nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and their oils for cooking.



5 Herbs and spices to flavour foods, instead of adding salt.

For heart health information visit heartfoundation.org.au

What if I have risk factors or heart disease?

If you have risk factors for heart disease or have been diagnosed with heart disease, we recommend following a heart-healthy eating pattern with some key changes:

✔ If you have high cholesterol or have heart disease:



Choose reduced fat, unflavoured dairy products



Eat no more than 7 eggs per week



Include foods that have been fortified with plant sterols (like milk, yoghurt, breakfast cereals, margarine)

✔ If you have type 2 diabetes:



Eat no more than 7 eggs per week

What about dietary fats, and what oils should I be cooking with?



Healthier fats that can reduce your risk of heart disease can be found in: nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and their oils.



For salad dressings and low-medium temperature healthy cooking, use: olive, canola, peanut, sunflower, soybean, sesame and safflower oils.



For high temperature cooking, especially frying, use: extra virgin olive oil, high oleic canola oil or high oleic peanut oil.

Can I eat meat?

Eating meat can still be part of a heart-healthy eating pattern. However, the amount and type of meat is important. We recommend:



Mostly fish, seafood, legumes (like beans, lentils and chickpeas), nuts and seeds



Smaller amounts of eggs and lean poultry

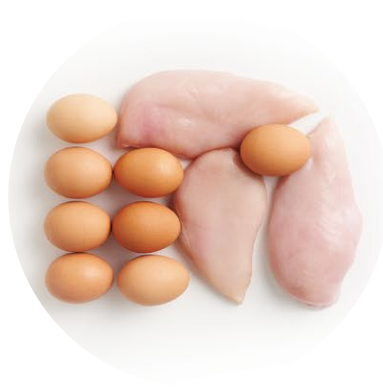


If you eat red meat, ensure the meat is lean and limit to 1-3 times per week (max 350g per week)



Avoid processed meats like sausages, bacon, ham and other deli meats

Healthy protein scale



Eat more



Eat less

What should my plate look like?

Use healthy oils for cooking e.g. olive, canola, peanut, sunflower, soybean, sesame and safflower oils



Fill 1/2 of your plate with a variety of colourful vegetables and salad



Fill 1/4 of your plate with healthy proteins



1/4 of your plate should contain wholegrains such as wholegrain bread, brown rice, or wholemeal pasta or cereal grains like corn, buckwheat or bulgur



Add flavour by using herbs and spices instead of salt

Heart-healthy eating action plan

See how well your current eating habits align with the heart-healthy eating pattern and where you can make simple changes to eat healthier. The below action plan is for general guidance. For specialised dietary advice, speak to an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

	Already doing this	Ready to do now	Not ready yet	Comments
Vegetables: At least 5 serves of vegetables every day and lots of variety				
Fruit: 2 serves of fruit every day				
Wholegrains: Including breads, cereals, pasta, rice and noodles				
Plant proteins: Enjoy meals and snacks with beans, legumes, tofu, nuts and seeds				
Fish and seafood: 2-3 serves (150-200g/serve) of fish every week				
Lean meats: Meat trimmed of fat and poultry without skin				
Plain, unflavoured milk, yoghurt, and cheese: Those with existing heart disease or high cholesterol should choose reduced fat varieties				
Healthy fats: In foods such as avocados, olives, nuts and seeds, and their oils for cooking				
Herbs and spices: Use to flavour foods, instead of adding salt				
Eggs: Those with high cholesterol or type 2 diabetes should eat no more than 7 eggs per week				
Plant sterols: Include 2-3g a day from fortified foods (milk, yoghurt, breakfast cereals, margarines)				
Water: Drink mainly plain water and choose caffeinated drinks like coffee and tea in moderation				
Red meat: No more than 1-3 meals (350g) a week				
Salt: Have less than 1 teaspoon (5g) of salt each day, including salt already in processed and pre-packaged foods				
Saturated and trans fats: In foods such as butter, ghee, coconut oil, fat on meat, deep-fried foods, biscuits, cakes, pastries etc.				
Discretionary and highly processed foods and drinks: Such as processed meats (sausages, bacon, deli meats), baked goods (cakes, pastries, biscuits), chocolate, chips, lollies, takeaway foods and sugary drinks				
Alcohol: There is no safe amount of alcohol for heart health. The less you drink the better. For some people, not drinking at all is the safest option				

Goal setting

Now that you've reviewed the Heart-healthy eating action plan, it's time to set some goals!

Setting small, clear goals can help you make lasting changes to your eating habits. Use the questions below to create a simple plan that works for you. Remember, it's okay to start small—every step toward a heart-healthy eating pattern makes a difference.

Goal: What do I want to achieve?	Outcome: What will happen or how will I feel when I reach my goal?	Challenges: What might stop me from reaching my goal?	Action: What steps will I take to reach my goal?	Timeline: When do I want to achieve this by?
<i>Example: I want to reduce the amount of salt I eat to less than 1 tsp a day.</i>	<i>Example: I will reduce my risk of developing high blood pressure.</i>	<i>Example: I like the taste when I add salt to my meals.</i>	<i>Example: I will gradually add less salt when cooking and use herbs and spices to flavour meals instead.</i>	<i>Example: Start straight away. Check in at 4 weeks</i>
1				
2				
3				



Looking for heart-healthy recipes?

Check out our full range of delicious recipes at:

heartfoundation.org.au



Heart Foundation recipes reflect our Heart Healthy Eating Pattern recommendations. If you have specific dietary needs please check that our recipes do not contain ingredients, or combinations of ingredients, that are likely to be inappropriate for your circumstances. These recipes do not replace advice from your doctor or dietitian. Terms of use: This material has been developed by the National Heart Foundation of Australia (Heart Foundation) for general information and educational purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have, or suspect you have, a health problem. The information provided is based on evidence available at the time of publication. Please refer to the Heart Foundation website at heartfoundation.org.au for Terms of Use.

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