

## RECOMMENDED FOODS FOR A HEALTHY DIET

EVERYDAY USE These foods are low in sugar and/or saturated fat or high in fibre	EAT OCCASIONALLY A few of these foods should only be eaten once a week	FOODS TO AVOID These foods are high in sugar or fat, particularly saturated fat
<b>CEREALS &amp; BISCUITS</b> Wholegrain flour, bread and crisp-breads. Brown rice and wholemeal pasta. Wholegrain/wheat-based breakfast cereals (high in fibre)	White flour, white bread, plain biscuits, cream cracker. Refined breakfast cereals eg. cornflakes	Sweet chocolate and cream filled biscuits. Cheese biscuits. Sugar or honey coated breakfast cereals
<b>FRUIT &amp; VEGETABLES</b> All fresh, frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables including potatoes - jacket, boiled or mashed	Fried or roasted potatoes if cooked in suitable fat. Low-fat oven chips	Chips, fried or roast potatoes if cooked in an unsuitable fat or oil (see FATS below)
<b>FISH</b> White fish, oily fish fresh or tinned in tomato sauce or well-drained if in brine	Shellfish, fish paste, smoked fish	Fish roe, taramasalata, deep fried fish eg. cod and scampi
<b>MEAT</b> Fresh, frozen or tinned lean beef, lamb, ham, chicken and turkey without skin	Liver, kidney, low fat sausages and pate etc.	Sausages, black pudding, salami, meat with visible fat eg. streaky bacon
<b>EGGS &amp; DAIRY</b> Egg whites (cooked), skimmed milk. Semi-skimmed milk used in small amounts eg. 2/3 pint daily. Cottage cheese, low fat and natural yoghurts	Four eggs per week (cooked). Reduced fat cheese	Hard cheese, whole milk, fresh or tinned cream. Yoghurt made with whole milk
<b>NUTS</b>	Almonds, brazils, chestnuts, hazelnuts (small portions)	Cashews and peanuts (salted and dried)
<b>FATS</b> Pure cooking oils such as corn, sunflower, soya, olive and rapeseed oils. Spreads that are high in polyunsaturates and low in saturated fat are acceptable in small quantities		Butter, margarine high in saturates and/or low in polyunsaturates, suet dripping, lard, white fat
<b>SWEETS AND PRESERVES</b> Saccharine-based sweeteners	Boiled sweets, peppermint, jam, marmalade, sugar	Chocolates, chocolate spreads, toffee, mincemeat, marzipan
<b>DRINKS</b> Water, tea, coffee, unsweetened fruit juice, diet or sugar-free drinks	Alcohol, fruit cordials, fizzy drinks, low fat milky drinks	

## CHOLESTEROL WHY CHOLESTEROL IS IMPORTANT?



In general, the higher your total blood cholesterol level, the greater your risk of coronary heart disease. You should aim for a total cholesterol level of under 5mmol/l (millimols of cholesterol per litre of blood). If your blood cholesterol is even slightly above this level, you can greatly benefit from reducing it.

Other factors which affect your risk of heart disease include smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight, being physically inactive and having diabetes, particularly if your blood sugar control is not good.

### HEART DISEASE AND CHOLESTEROL

As blood and cholesterol don't mix, the liver manufactures special carriers called lipoproteins to ferry cholesterol around. At least two lipoproteins affect the risk of heart disease.

i) **Low-density lipoprotein**, or LDL, is the major carrier of cholesterol. If there is too much LDL in the blood, cholesterol may find its way into artery walls, where it begins to build up and may cause atherosclerosis. A high level of LDLs in the diet is very undesirable.

ii) **High density lipoprotein**, or HDL, is thought to pick up fragments of cholesterol and transport them to the liver for repackaging or disposal thereby preventing it from damaging the arteries. HDLs in the diet are therefore desirable.

The body requires a small amount of cholesterol which it produces itself. Fatty meats and full-fat dairy produce as well as egg yolks, provide an additional and mostly unnecessary source. A healthy diet will help you control your cholesterol levels, particularly if you reduce the intake of these foods and increase your intake of fruit and vegetables (see table on back page).

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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, DIET AND CHOLESTEROL

## How does physical activity help reduce cholesterol?

- Regular physical activity helps lower total blood cholesterol and this is dose related meaning the more you exercise, the greater the fall in cholesterol.
- Perhaps more importantly physical activity raises the level of good HDL cholesterol as well as increases the ratio of HDL ('good cholesterol') to LDL ('bad cholesterol').
- Physical activity affects the measure of HDL and LDL more effectively than any other measure alone, but it has to be done regularly to maintain the improvements.
- Regular physical activity has the additional benefit of lowering several other important coronary risk factors such as blood pressure and body weight as well as reducing the risk of developing diabetes.
- Physical activity, along with a healthy diet, helps reduce stress and improves your overall feeling of well-being and quality of life, and helps you to sleep well.
- Additional general benefits of physical activity include reductions in the risk of bowel cancer, osteoporosis and the risk of falling.

## What type of activity is best?

While stamina-based activity is particularly important for health, you also need to include some strength and flexibility-based activity to get the best health gains.

**Stamina-type activities:** Walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, tennis and housework (washing floors or windows)

**Strength-type activities:** Walking uphill, carrying shopping, climbing stairs, gardening (digging or mowing) and housework

**Flexibility-type activities:** Swimming, dancing, yoga, Pilates, T'ai Chi and gardening

### Tips on increasing your activity level

- Walking is an ideal activity as it's free and easy to do anywhere. Perhaps take a dog for a walk to make it more interesting.
- Look for opportunities to be active during your whole day. For example park at the far end of the car park, or walk one stop further to catch the bus, and take 10 minutes out of your lunch break to go for a walk.
- Try using the stairs instead of the escalator. If you do use the escalator start by walking part of the way up and gradually progress to walking up the whole way.
- Choose activities that you enjoy doing. Involve your friends and family to make your activities fun, sociable and enjoyable.

## How much and how often?

**Frequency** Your main aim is to build up to 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on 5 or more days of the week. If this seems too much to start with, try starting with 3 x 10 minute walks spread throughout the day and work towards 2 x 15 minute walks and then 30 continuous minutes. One goal is to try and increase your activity by 2 minutes each day.

**Intensity** Moderate intensity means breathing harder and getting warmer than normal. It does not need to be hard. You should be able to talk and be active at the same time.

**Advice** Whatever your chosen activity, it should be performed at a gentle intensity which gradually increases until after about 10 minutes you have reached the level you can maintain for your chosen period of activity. This gets the blood flowing to your muscles and allows your heart rate to increase gradually. When you are nearing the end of your activity you should also slowly decrease the level of activity over 5-10 minutes to allow your heart rate to slow down gradually.

**Remember** Set yourself realistic goals and don't worry if you miss one day. Just make sure that the next day you pick up where you left off.

## How does eating more healthily help?

- While eating foods such as egg yolks and shellfish which contain large amounts of cholesterol does increase blood cholesterol levels, most of the cholesterol in the body is made from saturated fats consumed in the diet. These saturated fats come mainly from fatty joints of meat and manufactured meat ie. sausages, and hamburgers. Other main sources include cream, full fat milk, butter and cheese. All these saturated fats raise blood cholesterol levels. Reducing the intake of these fats in your diet will help reduce your cholesterol levels.
  - Unsaturated fats on the other hand can help lower blood cholesterol. For example fish oils (eg. those in mackerel and herring).
  - The aim is to reduce your overall intake of fat and replace as much saturated fat as possible with polyunsaturated fat.
- The following points can help:**
- Choose lean cuts of meat, trim off fat and grill rather than fry.
  - Eat oily fish (herring, mackerel, salmon) two or three times a week.
  - Use polyunsaturated spreads rather than butter and skimmed milk instead of full fat.
  - Avoid prepared meat eg. sausages, pate.