



# Eating for a Healthy Heart



Eating well is one way to help keep your heart healthy. A heart-healthy diet works in a number of ways. For example, it may help reduce cholesterol levels, prevent excessive blood clotting and lower blood pressure. To reduce your risk of heart disease:

## Enjoy a Variety of Fruit and Vegetables

Aim to include five or more portions each day. A portion is about 2-3 tablespoons of vegetables, two small fruit eg. plums or one larger fruit eg. apple ([www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)).

Fruit and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants that help protect your heart. Fresh, frozen, tinned and dried varieties are all fine. 100% juice and pulses also count as one daily portion. Supplements don't have the same benefit.

An example of how to get 5 a day would be to have fruit juice or a smoothie with breakfast, fruit or salad with lunch, a snack of raisins, a vegetable or beans with your evening meal followed by tinned fruit.

Beans, pulses and lentils have the added benefit of releasing their energy slowly which is thought to be good for heart health. Soya may also have additional benefits. Go to the BDA website to view fact sheets on Soya and Health and GI.

## Focus on Fats

There are different types of fats in the diet and these have different effects on the heart.

**Trans fats** are associated with increased risk of heart disease. Try to reduce consumption of the following foods in order to avoid trans fats: hydrogenated vegetable fat oils, shortenings, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, pastry, sauces and oils used repeatedly for deep frying such as fast foods and takeaways.

**Saturated fat** is found mainly in fatty processed foods. It also occurs in animal products including butter, ghee, lard, suet, dripping, high fat cheese, cream, full fat milk and fat on meat and poultry. Having a high intake of saturated fat is linked with raised levels of harmful (LDL) cholesterol.

Replacing saturated fat with a small amount of **monounsaturated fat** can reduce harmful cholesterol. Monounsaturated fat is found in olive oil and rapeseed (canola) oil.

Including a type of **polyunsaturated fat** called **omega 3** is important for heart health.

## Feast on Fish

Omega 3 is a polyunsaturated fat found in fish that appears to have benefits for heart health.

If you have had a heart attack aim to have 2-4 portions of oily fish a week. Everyone else should aim to have one portion of oily fish a week.

### Examples of oily fish are:

Salmon, herring, sardines, mackerel, pilchards, trout, kippers, (fresh, frozen or tinned) and tuna (fresh or frozen tuna only). You can view the BDA fact sheet on Omega 3 on the BDA website for more information or go to [www.vegsoc.org/omega3.pdf](http://www.vegsoc.org/omega3.pdf) for more information if you don't eat fish.



## General Tips for a Healthy Heart

- ♦ Aim for five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- ♦ Have oily fish or vegetarian sources of omega 3 regularly
- ♦ Add beans and extra vegetables to stews, stir-fry, curry, shepherd's pie, bolognese, chilli
- ♦ Increase your intake of beans and pulses (tinned beans are already cooked)
- ♦ Limit your intake of processed foods, pastries, fried and fast food - choose filled rolls, baked potato or home cooked food instead where possible
- ♦ Cut down on fatty meat products such as sausages, pies and streaky bacon - choose unprocessed meat or fish instead
- ♦ Go easy on spreads. Choose one without trans fats
- ♦ Use more wholegrains (high fibre bread and breakfast cereals, oats, brown rice and pasta) and beans, peas, lentils



- ♦ Snack on fruit, fruitloaf, sandwiches, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, yogurt, high fibre cereals and plain biscuits

- ◆ Keep salt intake low - refer to the BDA Salt fact sheet on the BDA website for further information
- ◆ Keep your alcohol intake within sensible limits - refer to the BDA Alcohol factsheet on the BDA website for further information
- ◆ Aim to be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day
- ◆ Be smoke free

If you decide to make changes, begin slowly with one or two suggestions. Remember, it is best to focus on improving your eating and exercise patterns as the main goal rather than aiming for weight loss.

Dieting can lead to weight yo-yoing which is bad for your heart. By eating well and being active you may or may not lose weight - but you will improve your heart health



even if your weight stays the same. You could start by adding fruit juice at breakfast or walking more.

**Enjoy!**

