



Food

for a healthy heart

lifestyle



the heart of the matter

They say, "You are what you eat." Well maybe we should add, "Your heart is as good as the food you give it". What you eat and drink has a great influence on your heart's health. By making small changes to your diet and eating habits, you can:

- ♥ prevent the furring up of your arteries (atherosclerosis) or greatly slow its progression
- ♥ maintain healthy cholesterol levels ♥ affect your blood's tendency to clot
- ♥ lower blood pressure ♥ control/reduce your weight and waist size
- ♥ delay the onset of diabetes.

Not only will this be a tremendous boost for your heart, it will help improve the quality of your life and your health in general.

good habits last a lifetime

Make your new heart healthy lifestyle a routine for both you and your family, so it will be easier to maintain.

the key to a healthy heart diet

We're always hearing about a 'healthy balanced diet', but do you really know what this means? It means eating a range of foods in the right proportions.

Imagine all the food you eat in one day. Overall, you should be eating

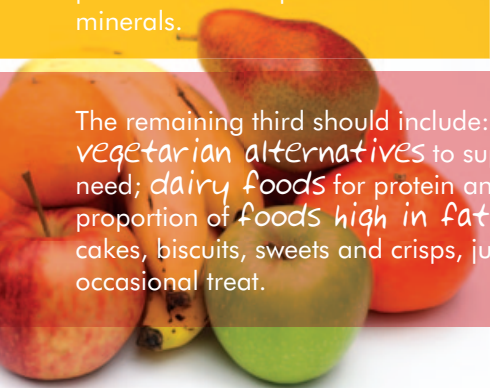
One third *fruit and vegetables*. Have as many different colours and varieties as you can to give your body a wide range of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibre.

One third *starchy foods* such as potatoes, rice, bread, pasta and cereals. Choose wholegrain varieties wherever possible as these provide fibre and other vitamins and minerals.

The remaining third should include: *meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives* to supply the protein you need; *dairy foods* for protein and calcium; and a small proportion of *foods high in fat and sugar* like spreads, cakes, biscuits, sweets and crisps, just keeping them as an occasional treat.

Fruit and Veget

Meat and Prot



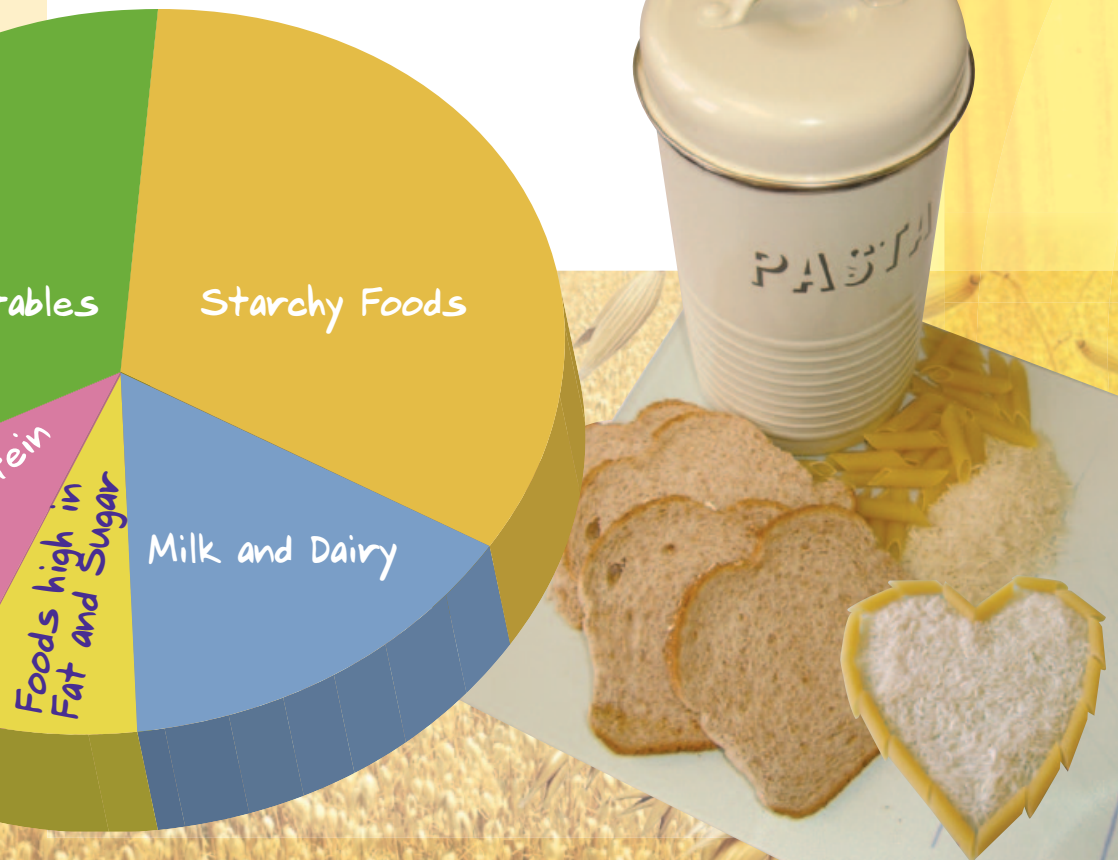
a matter of balance

Eating foods from the different groups in the right proportions and keeping your diet varied will give you a healthy balanced diet. Drinking plenty of water and low calorie fluids is important too.

Remember that the main purpose of eating is to provide energy to match your requirements. It's a simple equation:

eating more than you need = weight gain

For a heart healthy diet, however, a few more important changes are needed. You need to be *fatwise*, *saltwise* and wise up on *antioxidants* and *fibre*.



fats for the heart

Your body needs some fat for energy storage, for insulation and for making certain hormones. Foods containing fats also provide us with some important vitamins. Only small amounts are needed in our diets to meet all these needs.

Less than 35% of the total energy you get from what you eat should come from calories in fats and oils. This seems a generous amount but remember that fat is a concentrated source of calories. 35% of calories in fat equates to around 95g fat per day for men and 70g per day for women, a value which should be lower if you are trying to lose weight.

Fats and oils in our food are made up of fatty acids, a group of molecules that fall into three main types: **saturated**, **monounsaturated** and **polyunsaturated**. Some of these are better for our cholesterol levels, and our hearts, than others.

So get fatwise for a healthy heart and healthy arteries.

Too much **saturated fat** in your diet will result in increased blood cholesterol levels and a greater risk of heart disease.

Trans fats, sometimes known as hydrogenated vegetable oil, also carry a health warning for your heart as they cause unhealthy cholesterol levels and increase the risk of blood clotting.

They are mainly made by the food industry although very low levels are naturally found in ruminant meat.

Foods high in **saturated fat**:

cakes, pastries, butter, ghee, lard, cream, cheese, sausages, fatty cuts of meat, coconut, palm oil and many processed products.

Foods high in **trans fats**:

chicken nuggets, fish fingers
tortilla chips, crackers, popcorn
pies (savoury and sweet)
doughnuts, pastries, cookies, muffins
fried foods, including chips, at fast food outlets
some brands of frozen chips
vegetable suet and shortening
some margarines

Monounsaturated fats can

benefit your heart's health if eaten in moderation. They help to promote healthy cholesterol levels, prevent clot formation and reduce the risk of arrhythmias (disturbances in the heart rhythm).

Another type of fat, **omega-3**

polyunsaturates, have also been shown to reduce cholesterol levels, prevent clot formation and reduce the risk of arrhythmias, as well as slightly lower blood pressure. These cannot be made by the body. The best sources are oily fish, not white fish.

Foods high in **monounsaturates** and/or **omega-3s**:

oily fish (mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna, salmon)
flaxseed, pumpkin seeds
walnuts, almonds
avocados
olive oil, rapeseed oil

the spice of life

herbs and spices, not salt

It is recommended that adults eat no more than **6 grams of salt** per day. This amounts to only a teaspoon and most adults currently consume double that amount.

Too much salt can increase blood pressure and this puts our hearts under strain and harms our arteries.

five a day

eat more fruit and vegetables

As children, our parents told us to eat our fruit and vegetables. This is wise advice as they are the main source of a variety of antioxidants and fibre.

Cells in our bodies are constantly exposed to damaging oxidants (reactive molecules called free radicals) from normal body processes, smoking, pollution and fried foods. Free radicals can cause damage to sensitive cells like those lining the walls of arteries. Antioxidants are our body's line of defence against these harmful chemicals, neutralising their damaging effects. The antioxidant family includes vitamins (A, C and E), minerals (selenium, zinc) and compounds like carotenoids, flavonoids and phytochemicals.

Over 75% of the salt we eat comes from processed foods, so be careful when shopping, cooking and flavouring food, as you will soon reach your 6g. It pays to read the small print as manufacturers often list sodium instead of salt.

1g sodium is equivalent to 2.5g salt.



Just Eat More
(fruit & veg)



Consumption of foods rich in antioxidants can help protect our hearts and arteries, so colour up your plate with a range of fruit and vegetables. This will also have the added bonus of providing fibre that provides bulk in your diet and helps curb those between-meal hunger pangs. There are two types of fibre, soluble and insoluble, both of which are important for our health. Insoluble fibre helps speed up the intestinal transit of food and reduces the absorption of fats, while soluble fibre promotes healthy cholesterol levels. So make sure you get at least 5-a-day!

wise up to food labels*

Values per 100g		
	HIGH (eat small amounts of these)	LOW (choose these)
Total fat	20g or more	3g or less
Saturated fat	5g or more	1g or less
Sugars	10g or more	2g or less
Salt	1.5g or more	0.3g or less
Sodium	0.6g or more	0.1g or less

(*guidelines based on the Food Standards Agency recommendations)

heart healthy meal tips

Now you've had the theory lesson, here are some practical tips:

- ♥ **Eat lots of starchy foods** like bread, pasta, rice, potatoes and chapattis and choose wholegrain varieties
- ♥ **Eat at least 5 portions** of fruit and vegetables every day and choose a variety of types and colours
- ♥ **Cook smart.** Use fat free cooking methods such as steaming, grilling, boiling and baking whenever possible and trim off skin and any visible fat from meat before cooking
- ♥ **The best oils** to use are olive oil and rapeseed oil (often sold as vegetable oil). Replace butter and margarine with rapeseed oil (for every 4oz use 5 tbsp oil). Never re-use cooking oil
- ♥ **Try alternatives to meat** such as Quorn, soya mince, tofu or beans and pulses - they are very versatile
- ♥ **Spread thinly.** Butter and margarine are both high in fat. Beware of even the low fat varieties, especially as they also contain salt
- ♥ **Go steady with the dairy.** Skimmed milk contains all the goodness of milk (like protein and calcium) but without the fat. Low fat fromage frais and crème fraîche are excellent low fat alternatives to cream and remember that 'low fat' hard cheeses and spreads are still relatively high in fat
- ♥ **Fishy on a dishy.** Eat fish twice a week, with at least one portion of oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, fresh tuna, sardines, herring, kippers, pilchards and trout
- ♥ **Drink lots of water** to keep hydrated and fight off hunger pangs
- ♥ **Stop adding salt** when cooking and at the table. Experiment and add flavour with herbs and spices. Your taste buds will soon adjust to the real flavours of food and you won't add to the risk of heart disease
- ♥ **No salty stock.** Stock cubes and gravy mixes are high in salt so look for low salt varieties, better still make your own
- ♥ **A heartier breakfast.** Sprinkle combinations of flaxseed, pumpkin seeds or small amounts of almonds or walnuts on your cereal in the morning, or make your own muesli
- ♥ **A note on alcohol.** While consumption of red wine and beer may have a protective effect on heart health, it is best to drink in moderation, with no more than two units a day for men and one unit a day for women. If you have serious heart problems, diabetes, high blood pressure or high triglycerides, alcohol should be avoided
- ♥ **Healthier snacks.** Replace high fat and high sugar snacks such as crisps, biscuits, cakes and sweets with fruit (fresh or dried), carrot sticks, home-made popcorn or unsalted nuts
- ♥ **Digest the small print.** Check the fat (total and type of fat), salt, sodium and sugar content on food labels. Many processed foods contain hidden amounts, which can be spotted from the ingredients list. Trans fats are found in foods containing hydrogenated vegetable oil, vegetable shortening and suet. Sugar can be sucrose, lactose, glucose, syrup or dextrins



Heart Research UK is a national charity funding pioneering research into the prevention, treatment and cure of heart disease. We also support community-based lifestyle projects encouraging people to look after their heart health.

For more information contact us on 0113 297 6206 or email us at lifestyle@heartresearch.org.uk

Visit our website www.heartresearch.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1044821. Heart Research UK, Suite 12D, Joseph's Well, Leeds LS3 1AB.

More information

Other Heart Research UK leaflets are available on the following topics

Being Active | Cholesterol | Diabetes | Blood Pressure | Smoking | General Healthy Heart advice and many more....