



# Healthy Heart Tip Sheet

## What is high blood cholesterol?

High blood cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease that you can change.

## Risk factors for heart disease are:

- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Cigarette smoking
- Family history of heart disease before age 55
- Low HDL cholesterol (less than 35mg/dl)
- Circulation disorders
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Being a male

## The National Cholesterol Education Program total blood cholesterol categories for adults are:

Desirable:	Less than 200mg/dl
Borderline high:	200 to 239mg/dl
High:	240mg/dl or greater

## What is HDL or LDL cholesterol?

HDL (high density lipoprotein) and LDL (low density lipoprotein) are “packages” of cholesterol, fat, and protein that are made by the body to carry fat and cholesterol through the blood. They are not in the foods you eat; they are in your blood. Low and high density lipoprotein cholesterol levels more accurately predict your risk of heart disease than just total cholesterol alone. A **high** LDL-cholesterol level or a **low** HDL-cholesterol level increases your risk of heart disease. Your doctor will test these levels if the average of your total cholesterol measurement is either “borderline” or “high”, or if you have two or more of the risk factors listed above.

## Is cholesterol the same as fat?

No! Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance present in all ANIMAL foods – meat, poultry, fish, milk, milk products, and egg yolk. Cholesterol and fat are not the same thing.

## What kinds of fat are there?

All fats in foods are mixtures of three types of fatty acids – saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated.

**Saturated:** found in largest amounts in fats from meat and dairy products and in some vegetable fats such as coconut, palm, and palm kernel oil.

**Monounsaturated:** found mainly in olive, peanut, and canola oils.

**Polyunsaturated:** found mainly in safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean, cottonseed oils, and some fish.

## Does what you eat have an effect on your heart health?

Yes! Saturated fat raises blood cholesterol more than anything else you eat. Dietary cholesterol also raises blood cholesterol, but it usually has less of an effect. Eating less saturated fat and cholesterol and more mono- and polyunsaturated fat will help lower blood cholesterol.

## What is a recommended eating pattern for a healthy heart?

The tips on the reverse side of this sheet should be followed by adults as well as healthy children over two years of age when these children begin eating meals with the rest of the family.



## Heart-Healthy Recommended Eating Patterns

### 1. Eat fewer foods high in saturated fat.

- Choose skim and low-fat dairy products, lean meats, fish and poultry.
- Enjoy higher fat meats and full-fat dairy products occasionally.
- Remove visible fat; prepare foods without a lot of added fat, and watch “extras” like sauces and gravies.
- Use fats and oils that contain unsaturated fats (canola, safflower, corn, soybean, cottonseed, sesame, sunflower, olive and peanut).
- 30% or fewer of your daily calories should come from all fat.

### 2. Eat fewer high cholesterol foods.

Eat fewer egg yolks (no more than 4 per week) and organ meats such as liver, kidneys, and brain (no more than once a month).

### 3. Choose more foods high in complex carbohydrates.

Breads, pasta, rice, cereals, dry beans and peas, and fruits and vegetables are good sources of complex carbohydrates and contain little or no saturated fat and no cholesterol.

### 4. Remember the 3-Bs: Broil, Boil, and Bake as often as possible when you cook or eat out. Avoid foods that are pan-fried or deep-fried.

## Beware— Labels don't tell all!

### What does “91% Fat-Free” really mean?

Advertisers “talk” in terms of product weight, not usually in terms of percent of calories. Here’s how to read a label with heart-healthy eating in mind:

1. Look for the number of grams per serving.

**EXAMPLE:**

$$\begin{array}{r} 10 \text{ grams of fat} \\ \times 9 \text{ calories per gram} \\ \hline 90 \text{ fat calories} \end{array}$$

2. Multiply by 9 (the number of calories per 1 gram of fat.)

3. Look for the number of calories per serving.

**320** calories per serving

4. Divide the fat calories by the calories per serving.

$$320 \overline{) 90 \text{ fat calories}} \begin{array}{r} .28 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

5. The number you get is the % fat calories per serving.

**28%** fat in one serving

If you want to maintain a heart-healthy diet that has only 30% of calories from fat per day, you need to limit foods that have a high number listed for grams of fat.

### Does “No Cholesterol” on a food label mean heart-healthy?

Not necessarily. Look for the number of grams of fat, and if the number is high, the food may not be heart-healthy. Also, a food that is labeled as containing “no cholesterol” may still be high in saturated fat, which is not heart-healthy.

### Does being overweight affect cholesterol?

Being overweight may contribute to a high cholesterol level. Losing weight may help reduce this level.

### Will exercise make a difference?

Regular physical activity is very important for heart health and weight management.



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