

Healthy eating when your cholesterol is high

What you need to know

Fat in the diet and fat stored in the body both play an important part in how the body works. Some fat in the diet is essential. Food contains several different types of fat. Eating too much of some types of fat can increase the risk of developing heart disease and other health problems. A healthy diet provides a balance between the different types of fat:

- **Saturated fats:** Consuming large amounts of saturated fat increases blood cholesterol levels. It is recommended to limit these fats in the diet. Saturated fats are found in animal foods and some cooking oils (e.g. palm and coconut oils). The visible fat on meat and chicken is mainly saturated fat. The fat used in commercially baked biscuits and cakes, and the oil used in many deep-fried takeaway foods is often high in saturated fat.
- **Dietary cholesterol:** People with high blood cholesterol levels should limit foods high in cholesterol, such as offal (e.g. brains, kidneys, liver), prawns, squid and eggs.
- **Trans fats:** are another type of fat that can increase the risk of heart disease. Trans fats are found in foods high in saturated fat.
- **Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats:** Replacing saturated fat with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats can have a beneficial effect on your blood cholesterol levels. Monounsaturated fats are found in nuts (e.g. peanuts, almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts), vegetable oils (e.g. olive oil, canola, peanut oils) and avocados. Polyunsaturated fats are found in a wide range of foods including vegetable oils (e.g. sunflower and safflower, soybean), nuts (e.g. pine nuts and walnuts), polyunsaturated margarines and fish.

Other components of food are also important in reducing cholesterol. **Soluble fibre** is one type of fibre found in some plant foods (e.g. oats, barley, legumes, apples and berries). **Soy products** (e.g. soy beverages, tofu and soy-based meat alternatives) are also useful. **Plant sterols** occur naturally in many plant-based foods and in a concentrated amount in sterol-enriched margarine spreads.

What to eat

Balance fat in the diet by:

- Eating less saturated fat:
 - Increase the amount of low-fat, high fibre foods such as wholegrain breads and cereals, pasta, rice, vegetables, fruit and legumes (dried beans, peas, lentils).
 - Choose low fat dairy foods (see table), lean meat cuts, trim the fat off meat and remove the skin from chicken.
 - Use healthy cooking methods such as grilling, baking and stir-frying instead of deep-frying.
 - Limit takeaway foods such as pastries, pies and deep fried foods. Choose low fat dishes when you eat away from home.
 - Try to eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day.



- Choosing foods that contain monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats:
 - Use monounsaturated and polyunsaturated margarines, rather than butter or dairy blends.
 - Try other spreads and fillings in sandwiches such as avocado or peanut butter, rather than butter or cheese.
 - Use a variety of oils for salads and cooking (e.g. canola, sunflower, soybean and olive oil).
 - Eat fish (canned or fresh) at least twice a week - particularly oily, deep-sea fish (e.g. tuna, salmon, sardines).
 - Add unsalted nuts to stir-fries, salads or vegetable dishes.

Some healthy fat alternatives

Food/ Ingredient	Healthier Alternatives
Full fat dairy products, ice cream	Low or reduced fat milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream, soy products
Sour cream	Plain, low fat yoghurt
Creamy sauces	Ricotta cheese mixed with cottage cheese, sauce made with low fat milk and reduced fat cheese
Fried chicken	Barbecue chicken with skin and stuffing removed
Processed meats (e.g. sausages, salami)	Lean roasted meat, turkey, chicken breast, low fat ham or pastrami
High fat snacks	Plain fruit and vegetables (fresh, canned, dried) and unsalted nuts
Toasted muesli	Untoasted muesli
Mayonnaise	Poly - or monounsaturated mayonnaise
Cream in desserts	Vanilla fruche or ricotta cheese blended with vanilla essence and sugar to taste
High fat pastry (e.g. short crust, puff)	Filo pastry sprayed with canola oil or brushed with plain yoghurt

Practical tips

- Learn to read labels on packaged foods to compare the fat content of different food products (check the nutrition panel column showing fat content per 100g).
- Roast meat on a rack with water underneath. This allows fat to drain away whilst keeping the meat tender.
- Exercise is an excellent way of reducing body fat and is essential to a healthy lifestyle.

Your Goals

To improve the balance of fat in my diet I will by/...../.....



The Dietitians Association of Australia endorses this nutrition guide and participated in its development as part of our work towards better food, better health and better living for all Australians. We are the largest professional nutrition-focused body in Australia. For general nutrition information, please visit www.daa.asn.au. For expert nutrition and dietary advice we recommend you contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). To find one near you, call our hotline 1800 812 942, visit www.daa.asn.au or look in the Yellow Pages under 'Dietitians'.