

Food for thought

Did you know that one in five people has high cholesterol? You could have it too. Even if you're active or thin, young or old. In fact, it may be part of your genetic makeup. So, although you eat right and exercise, you might need some help in controlling cholesterol.

Here's what you can do.

Start by eating fewer high-fat, high-cholesterol foods and watching calories. We've included a few tips on this sheet to get you on the right track.

If your total cholesterol is over 200, and diet and exercise aren't working to lower it, you may need to add medication. The fact is that diet and exercise can only do so much to lower your cholesterol. That is why you should ask your doctor if medication is right for you.

These are some guidelines for a healthy diet.

With your doctor, determine the number of calories you need each day to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight.

Eat fewer high-fat foods.

Choose foods high in fiber.

Go easy on the salt and sugar.

If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Read the labels to find the fat.

Here's how to calculate the percentage of fat per serving.

For example, look at the chart at the right. Take the number of fat calories. Divide it by the total number of calories ($90/100 = 90\%$). This means that 90% of the calories in this food are from fat. Total fat should be 25% to 35% of total calories with saturated fat being less than 7% of the total number of calories.

To choose low-fat products, ask yourself:

1. Is fat a major ingredient? To avoid too much fat or cholesterol, go easy on products that list any ingredient high in saturated fat or cholesterol.
2. Is there more than one type of fat in the product? When you see several high-fat ingredients on a label, the product could have too much fat in it.
3. Is the serving size appropriate? When figuring out the fat content in a food, make sure you use a serving size that is close to what you would really eat.

Choose your low-cholesterol, heart healthy diet

To get the nutrients you need, you have to eat a variety of foods. After determining your dietary goals with your doctor, adjust the number and size of portions to reach and stay at your healthy body weight.

Food Groups	Choose	Go easy on	Avoid
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans (dry beans and tofu are meat substitutes), eggs and nuts (up to 5 ounces of meat, poultry, fish/day)	Lean cuts of meat with fat trimmed, chicken and turkey without skin, fish, egg whites, cholesterol-free egg substitutes	Shellfish, goose, duck, egg yolks (2 egg yolks per week), nuts	Processed meats such as bacon, bologna, hot dogs
Milk, yogurt and cheese (2 or more servings/day; 3-4 for pregnant or breast-feeding woman)	Fat-free or low-fat (1%) dairy products such as fat-free milk, cheeses with no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce.	2% low-fat milk, yogurt, part-skim ricotta, imitation hard cheeses, "lite" cream cheese, sour cream	Whole milk, cream, custard-style yogurt, hard cheeses (like Swiss, American, cheddar), cream cheese, sour cream
Fats and oils (approximately 5-8 teaspoons/day)	Corn, olive, canola, sesame, soybean, peanut and sunflower oils, margarine made with unsaturated liquid vegetable oil.	Salad dressing and mayonnaise that are not non- or low-fat	Saturated fat, butter, lard, bacon fat, coconut, palm and palm kernel oils
Breads, cereals, pasta, rice, dried peas, and beans (6-11 servings/day)	Whole-grain breads, crackers and cereals, pasta, rice, dried peas and beans, plain baked potato.	Store bought pancakes, waffles, biscuits, muffins, cornbread, granola-type cereals, oat bran cereals made with coconut oil	Croissants, pastries, crackers made with saturated oils, egg noodles
Fruits and vegetables (3-5 servings/day)	Fresh, frozen or dried fruits, canned fruits, raw vegetables.	Canned fruit in heavy syrup	Coconut, vegetables prepared in butter, cream or sauce
Snacks (in very limited amounts)	Sorbet, low-fat frozen yogurt, angel food cake, fig bars, plain popcorn, pretzels, fruit juices, tea, coffee, gelatin deserts, graham crackers.	Ice milk, fruit crisps and cobblers, homemade cakes, cookies and pies prepared with unsaturated oils	Ice cream, chocolate, potato chips, buttered popcorn, most store-bought pies and cakes