

# EAT WELL LIVE LONGER

Simple steps to making healthy choices



HEART &  
STROKE  
FOUNDATION



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healthy choices

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# Eating well with Canada's Food Guide

By following the recommendations in *Canada's Food Guide*, you can be assured you'll meet your daily requirements for vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, helping you to achieve overall health and vitality. You'll also reduce your risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease.

## Canada's Food Guide recommendations

- Eating plenty of vegetables and fruit. Every day, include a dark green (such as broccoli, asparagus and romaine lettuce) and an orange (such as carrots and sweet potato) vegetable.
- Making half of your grain products whole grain (such as brown and wild rice, bulgur, quinoa and oatmeal) each day.
- Serving fish twice a week (such as rainbow trout, salmon and sardines).
- Including beans, lentils and tofu more often in your diet.
- Drinking plain lower-fat milk and milk alternatives such as fortified soy beverages. Be aware that other fortified drinks such as rice, almond and potato do not contain the same level of protein found in milk or soy.
- Using unsaturated oils such as canola, olive, and soybean as well as non-hydrogenated margarines (no more than 25 to 45 mL/2 to 3 tbsps a day).
- Taking a Vitamin D supplement if you are over the age of 50. If you are planning on becoming pregnant, take a multivitamin that contains folic acid. Once pregnant, your supplements should also contain iron.
- Accumulating 150 minutes a week of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Children and youth should accumulate at least 60 minutes of activity per day.



## Canada's Food Guide recommends limiting:

- Foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt
- Saturated fats from fatty meats, butter, lard, ghee, shortening and hard margarines
- Trans fats in such foods as convenience and deep-fried foods as well as baked goods such as doughnuts, cookies, tortillas, parathas, steamed buns, pies and tarts
- Salt (sodium)
- Sugar from processed foods including restaurant foods, processed meats and condiments





Canada's Food Guide also outlines the number of servings we should eat from each of the Four Food Groups and provides guidance on portion sizes. The recommended number of serving sizes is based on age and gender. Look at the chart below to find your recommended number of Food Guide servings per day. Remember that it is just the average amount that people should try to eat each day.

## Recommended number of Food Guide servings per day

Age in Years	Children			Teens		Adults			
	2-3	4-8	9-13	14-18		19-50		51+	
Sex	Girls and Boys			Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Vegetables and Fruit	4	5	6	7	8	7-8	8-10	7	7
Grain Products	3	4	6	6	7	6-7	8	6	7
Milk and Alternatives	2	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	2	2	3	3
Meat and Alternatives	1	1	1-2	2	3	2	3	2	3

*The eating pattern also includes a small amount (30 to 45 mL or about 2 to 3 tablespoons) of unsaturated fat each day.*

## What does one Food Guide serving look like?

<b>Vegetables and fruit</b> 	1 cup (250 mL)	raw lettuce or spinach
	1/2 cup (125 mL)	frozen or canned vegetables or fruit
	1 medium	piece of fresh fruit or vegetable
	1/2 cup (125 mL)	vegetable juice
<b>Grain products</b> 	1 slice	bread
	1/2 piece	bagel, pita or flat breads
	1/2 cup (125 mL)	cooked rice, couscous or pasta
	3/4 cup (175 mL)	hot cereal
	30 g	cold cereal
<b>Milk and alternatives</b> 	1 cup (250 mL)	plain lower-fat milk or fortified soy beverages
	3/4 cup (175 mL)	plain lower-fat milk yogurt or kefir
	1.5 oz (50 g)	cheese (20% or less M.F.)
<b>Meat and alternatives</b> 	2.5 oz (75 g) or 1/2 cup (125mL)	cooked fish, shellfish, poultry or lean meat
	3/4 cup (175 mL)	cooked legumes (navy beans, lentils, chickpeas)
	3/4 cup (175 mL) or 150 g	tofu
	2	eggs
	2 tbsp (30 mL)	peanut or nut butters
	1/4 cup (60 mL)	shelled nuts or seeds

# The goodness of vegetables and fruit: Aim for 4 to 10 servings a day

You know that vegetables and fruit are good for you, but have you ever wondered just how good? Research shows that eating vegetables and fruit, especially dark green and orange ones, can help reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Along with their great taste and versatility, vegetables and fruit provide nutrients that are important for health. Here are a few great reasons to eat veggies and fruit often.

- They are packed with important vitamins and minerals, especially antioxidants like vitamin C and Beta-carotene (a form of vitamin A).
- Virtually all vegetables and fruit are low in fat and low in calories. Olives and avocados are the exceptions, so enjoy them in moderation.
- Vegetables and fruit are a delicious way to get dietary fibre. Soluble fibre, found in apples, strawberries and citrus fruit, helps to reduce the “bad” LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol, especially if it is high. It is recommended an adult should consume between 21 g to 38 g of fibre a day from a variety of sources.

It really doesn't matter whether you eat fresh, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit, or whether they are organic or not. They all have about the same nutritional value. What is important is that you eat a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit at every meal and snack. When using canned vegetables, rinse them with water or buy ones with no added salt.



## At home

- Top off your breakfast cereal with sliced bananas or fresh berries.
- Put a bowl filled with washed fruit on the top shelf of the refrigerator so it will be the first thing you see.
- Keep a bag of pre-cut vegetables in the refrigerator with some low-fat dip for easy snacking anytime.



## At work

- Round out your lunch with a tossed salad, side order of vegetables or fresh fruit for dessert when eating at a restaurant.
- Have a handful of unsalted nuts with no sugar added dried apricots or cranberries to satisfy afternoon munchies.



## Cooking tips

- Steam or cook vegetables in just a small amount of water to avoid losing nutrients.
- Add a dab of soft, non-hydrogenated margarine or drizzle balsamic vinegar to enhance the flavour of vegetables.
- Save time by using pre-washed, bagged salads, pre-sliced mushrooms, and pre-cut squash.
- Cut up extra vegetables when preparing dinner. Toss the extras in tomorrow night's casserole, chili or stir-fry.



## Storage tips

- Use separate crisper drawers for vegetables and fruit. Most fruit naturally give off a harmless gas called ethylene that will make the vegetables spoil faster.
- Keep pears, peaches, plums, tomatoes and cantaloupe at room temperature to help them ripen faster.
- Store apples in the fridge. They soften 10 times faster at room temperature.
- Freeze bananas that are overripe. They're fantastic in shakes and in homemade banana bread or muffins.





# Dietary fat and cholesterol

## The link

Unhealthy blood cholesterol contributes to heart-related problems including:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Clogging of the arteries (atherosclerosis)
- High blood pressure

The liver makes about 80% of the cholesterol in your body. The other 20% comes from the foods you eat. The foods that raise your blood cholesterol the most are saturated fat and trans fat in such foods as fatty meat and whole fat dairy products, snack foods and ready prepared foods.

Foods that have high levels of dietary cholesterol include egg yolks, organ meats, shrimp, squid and fatty meats. Individuals with heart disease or diabetes are advised to limit their daily intake of dietary cholesterol to 200 mg or less. To limit your blood cholesterol levels you should limit foods that are high in dietary cholesterol.

## Blood cholesterol: What's healthy, what's not

There are different types of cholesterol in your blood. Some types are good for health, some are bad. Cholesterol becomes unhealthy when the different types are unbalanced.

**HDL-Cholesterol:** (High Density Lipoprotein) This is a good type of cholesterol linked to heart health.

**LDL-Cholesterol:** (Low Density Lipoprotein) This is a bad type of cholesterol strongly associated with heart disease.

**Triglycerides:** This is another type of fat found in the body. The fats you eat also affect blood triglyceride levels and high triglyceride levels are also linked to heart disease.

## Fats and healthy eating

There are different types of fat in food. Some raise LDL-cholesterol, while others help to keep blood cholesterol levels healthy. For healthy eating, choose lower-fat foods more often and choose your fats wisely. Aim for more poly- and monounsaturated fat, and less trans and saturated fat.



## How much fat should I eat each day?

A healthy eating pattern includes between 20% to 35% of your day's calories from fat.

- For a woman this means about 45 to 75 grams of fat a day
- For a man this means about 60 to 105 grams of fat a day

Use these numbers as a guideline to compare how much fat is in a food or recipe with how much fat you should eat each day. Include a small amount – 2 to 3 tablespoons (25 to 45 mL) – of unsaturated fat each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.

## Know your fats

Choose healthy fats more often (such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats)

Types of fat	Major food sources	Quality of choice
<b>Healthy fats</b>		
<b>Monounsaturated fat/ Monounsaturates</b>	Olive, canola and peanut oils, non-hydrogenated margarines, nuts, seeds and avocados	Good
<b>Polyunsaturated fat/ Polyunsaturates</b>		
• <b>Omega-6 fat</b>	Safflower, sunflower and corn oils, non-hydrogenated margarines, nuts and seeds	Good
• <b>Omega-3 fat</b>	Fattier fish such as mackerel, herring, trout, salmon, swordfish, cod and bluefish	Good
	Canola and soybean oils, flax seed, omega-3 eggs, walnuts, pecans and pine nuts	
<b>Unhealthy fats</b>		
<b>Saturated fat/ Saturates</b>	Fatty meats, full-fat milk products, butter, lard, ghee, coconut, palm and palm kernel oils, fast foods, snack foods, many ready-prepared foods and those made with hydrogenated vegetable oil	Poor
<b>Trans fat</b>	All foods made with shortening or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, snack foods, fast foods and many ready-prepared foods	Poor

# Healthy snacking

Health experts recommend eating three small meals plus a couple of nutritious snacks throughout the day. Healthy snacking is for everyone, especially children. Small meals and frequent snacks are important to keep kids active, alert and growing. Less active adults and seniors may also feel more comfortable eating smaller, more frequent meals.

## Here are a few great reasons to snack

- Snacking keeps you feeling energized during your busy day and helps you beat afternoon fatigue.
- It also is a way that you can get all of the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy and protect you from heart disease, stroke and diabetes.
- Healthy snacking is a good way to manage your hunger. It prevents you from overeating at the next meal and can help you control your weight.

## A healthy snack is one that has...

- Fibre, which will make you feel full, helps you to resist higher fat and higher calorie temptations. Snacks with high fibre include plain lower-fat popcorn, whole-grain cereal, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Carbohydrates, which will give you quick energy. They include whole-wheat crackers, vegetables and fruit.
- Protein, which will provide sustained energy. Choices include lower-fat cheese, roasted soybeans, plain lower-fat Greek yogurt and unsalted nuts.

Watch the portion size. A snack is meant to be a mini-meal to tide you over until the next time you eat. Avoid processed snack foods such as doughnuts, cookies and other baked goods that often contain saturated fat, trans fat and added sugar.



Choose these healthier foods...	instead of...
Whole-grain crackers, muffins and breads	Doughnuts or danishes
No sugar added fresh or dried fruit	Fruit leathers
Plain lower-fat milk or water	Fruit juice, fruit drinks or soda pop
Plain lower-fat popcorn	Buttered or sugar-coated popcorn
Baked tortilla chips	Potato chips or cheesies
Angel food cake	Cheesecake
Whole-grain or oatmeal granola bars	Chocolate bars
Lower-salt or unsalted pretzels	Regular pretzels
Plain lower-fat yogurt	Ice cream
Trail mix with whole-grain cereal, nuts and seeds	Candy
Veggies and low fat dip	Potato chips and dip

## The scoop on sodium

Salt is made up of about 40% sodium and 60% chloride. When we talk about salt, we usually mean sodium. Processed foods make up about half of the sodium in our diets. Since the average North American diet contains too much sodium, it's wise to cut back on the amount of salt you eat.

- Limit your daily intake of sodium to 2,300 mg (1 tsp/5 mL of salt) total from processed foods, cooking and at the table. When you see "sodium-free" on a food label, it means that the food has less than 5 mg of sodium in the serving.
- Choose unsalted or lower-salt versions of foods when possible.
- Add less salt when cooking; use herbs and spices to flavour foods instead.

## Fast food and dining out

Fast foods are typically high in fat, calories and sodium. Eating too much fat, especially too much saturated and trans fat, can raise your blood cholesterol levels and put you at higher risk for heart disease, stroke and diabetes. In some people, a high sodium intake is associated with high blood pressure.

Meals eaten away from home tend to be low in vegetables, fruit and milk products and therefore low in important nutrients such as vitamin A, C, D, calcium and fibre. Try these tips to help round out your meals.

- If you know you will be eating a meal out, then plan to eat vegetables, fruit, whole grains and plain lower-fat milk products throughout the rest of the day.
- Choose plain lower-fat milk (2% M.F. or less) or water instead of pop. Whether they are diet or regular versions, soft drinks offer no nutrition.
- Start off with a mixed green salad or head to the salad counter and fill your plate with dark-green lettuce, broccoli, carrot sticks and fresh fruit. Have lower-fat salad dressings such as balsamic vinaigrette and always order dressings and dips on the side.
- Beware of super-sized items and combination meals that offer more food than you would normally eat. Don't feel obligated to clean your plate. Take home leftovers instead of overeating.
- Eating out is OK. But if you're a regular at fast food chains and take-out counters, then try to make nutritious choices as often as possible.



Choose these healthier foods...	instead of...
<b>At the coffee shop or breakfast shop</b>	
Low-fat whole grain muffin	Danish, doughnut
Whole-grain bagel with a small amount of light cream cheese, peanut butter or lower-fat cheese	Bagel loaded with cream cheese
Poached egg or plain omelette with unbuttered whole-grain toast	Fried egg sandwich with sausage or bacon, cheese omelet with hash browns
Coffee or tea with milk	Coffee or tea with cream with sugar
<b>At the deli or sandwich counter</b>	
Whole-grain bread or bun	White bread, croissant
Lean meat such as ham, chicken, turkey, roast beef	Higher fat options such as salami, pepperoni, bologna, bacon, meat balls, egg salad, tuna salad, salmon salad
Veggie dog	Hot dog
Green salad, fruit salad, bean salad	Caesar, potato salad or macaroni salad
Plain lower-fat milk or water	Fruit juice, soft drink
<b>At the burger place</b>	
Plain or child-size hamburger on a whole-grain bun	Double or triple-decker burger with cheese
Grilled chicken sandwich, veggie burger	Deep-fried chicken or fish sandwiches
Baked potato with either chili or lower-fat sour cream	French fries with gravy, baked potato with cheese and sour cream
Salad, dressing on the side	Super-sized combo meals
Plain lower-fat milk or water	Milkshake, soft drinks

Choose these healthier foods...	instead of...
<b>At the Asian restaurant</b>	
Steamed dumplings, steamed buns	Deep-fried chicken balls, sweet and sour pork
Grilled, steamed or stir-fried veggies	Deep-fried veggies like tempura
Fresh spring rolls, sushi, cucumber salad	Deep-fried egg rolls
Steamed rice, noodles in soup	Fried rice, fried noodles, chow mein
Low-sodium soy sauce, no MSG	Regular soy sauce, salt, MSG
<b>At the chicken eatery</b>	
Barbecued, baked, grilled or stir-fried chicken with skin removed	Battered deep-fried chicken fingers or nuggets, chicken wings
Grilled chicken sandwich or fajita	Chicken salad sandwich made with mayonnaise
Rice, baked potato with lower fat sour cream or plain yogurt	French fries, onion rings
Chicken soup with whole-grain crackers or whole-wheat roll	Chicken pot pie
Green salad with lower-fat dressing	Creamy coleslaw





Choose these healthier foods...	instead of...
<b>At the pizza parlour</b>	
Thin whole-wheat or other types of whole-grain crust	Thick white crust
Vegetarian or Hawaiian pizza	Pizza with the works
Lower-fat toppings such as ham, chicken, mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, artichokes, lower-fat cheese	Higher-fat toppings like bacon, sausage, salami, pepperoni, olives, extra cheese
<b>At the Italian eatery</b>	
Broiled, baked, grilled or poached fish, chicken or veal	Breaded, fried or deep-fried fish, chicken or veal
Pasta with vegetables in tomato sauce sprinkled with Parmesan cheese	Lasagna, pasta in cream sauce
Coffee with milk, café latté or cappuccino made with plain lower-fat milk	Coffee with cream
Fresh fruit, fruit crisp	Tiramisu, pastries



# Nutrition labelling: Check the Nutrition Facts table on packages

Food manufacturers are required to put certain information about their product on the label. The nutrition label gives you a snapshot of the food's nutrition value based on a diet of 2,000 calories. It helps you compare similar products and make informed choices about the foods you buy.



Key pieces of information to look for on the food label include:

**The ingredient list** – this is a list of all the ingredients found in the product beginning with the ingredient used most.

*Tips for reading the ingredient list*

- **Fats:** can be listed as fat, lard, shortening, oils (palm, coconut, hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable, ghee, vegetable ghee), monoglycerides, diglycerides or tallow.
- **Salt:** can be listed as salt, MSG, sodium, baking soda, baking powder, brine, kelp or soy sauce.
- **Sugar:** Can be listed as glucose, fructose, dextrose, maltose or sucrose.
- **Quantity:** The ingredient list does not provide amounts, so look for the Nutrition Facts table for more details.

**Nutrition Facts table** – information about the nutritional content of the product must be included on most pre-packaged foods including calories and 13 core nutrients. Some food and beverages such as fresh fruit, vegetables and single ingredient meat and poultry (that are not ground) do not have this information.

*Tips for reading the Nutrition Facts table*

- **Servings:** The table provides information about nutritional content, which is based on a very specific amount of food. Be sure to check the serving size since it can differ from product to product and compare it to the amount you eat.
- **Nutrient values:** Values listed for the 13 nutrients are for the amount of the nutrient in the specified quantity of food.
- **% daily values:** They are based on recommendations for a healthy diet. It will help you understand what the nutrient values mean. If a food contains 240 mg of sodium and the daily value for sodium is 2,400 mg, then this food is providing 10% of this amount.
- **More or less of a nutrient:** Use the table as a guide for nutrients you are trying to increase (such as fibre, vitamin A and C, calcium, iron) or trying to decrease (such as saturated and trans fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugar).

**Nutrient content claims** – a claim highlights a nutrition feature of a product. For example, “excellent source of fibre.”

*Tips for understanding nutrient content claims*

- **Nutrient content claims on a food package:** If you see a claim on a food package, remember to also look at the Nutrition Facts table. These claims usually only highlight one nutrient of a food, and are optional. Popular claims include: low, less, reduced or lower, more, very, high, light/lite, source of, good or high source of, excellent or very high source of.

**Health claims** – a claim highlighting a relationship between diet and certain disease, often used alongside a product’s nutrient content claim. For example, “A diet low in saturated and trans fat reduces the risk of heart disease.”

*Tips for understanding health claims*

- **Health claims on food packages:** Food companies can choose whether or not to include a health claim on their product if it meets the established criteria, but although a product may have health benefits, it might not always be the best choice for you. Remember to look at the Nutrition Facts table to double-check fat, sodium, sugar and essential nutrient levels.

## Getting information from the package can be easy. Here are a few nutrition labelling tips:

- When you compare products, make sure the serving sizes are similar.
- If you eat two times the serving size, you will get double the listed calories and nutrients.
- Look for a higher % Daily Value for nutrients such as fibre, vitamin A and C, calcium and iron.
- Look for a lower % Daily Value for fat, saturated and trans fat, cholesterol and sodium.
- Limit the amount of saturated and trans fat you consume.
- When you compare products, look for foods with the lower % Daily Value of fat.
- Choose foods with 2 grams or more of fibre per serving. Diets high in fibre can lower your risk of heart disease.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
<b>Valeur nutritive</b>	
Per 4 crackers (20 g) pour 4 craquelins (20 g)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
<b>Calories / Calories</b> 90	
<b>Fat / Lipides</b> 2 g	<b>3 %</b>
Saturated / saturés 0.3 g + Trans / trans 0 g	<b>2 %</b>
<b>Cholesterol / Cholestérol</b> 0 mg	
<b>Sodium / Sodium</b> 90 mg	<b>4 %</b>
<b>Carbohydrate / Glucides</b> 15 g	<b>5 %</b>
Fibre / Fibres 3 g	<b>12 %</b>
Sugars / Sucres 1 g	
<b>Protein / Protéines</b> 2 g	
<b>Vitamin A / Vitamine A</b>	<b>0 %</b>
<b>Vitamin C / Vitamine C</b>	<b>0 %</b>
<b>Calcium / Calcium</b>	<b>2 %</b>
<b>Iron / Fer</b>	<b>6 %</b>

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# Sugar and your health

Eating too much sugar is associated with heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood cholesterol and cancer, not to mention cavities.

Sugar is found in many foods, both naturally or added. Sugar provides energy (calories) but no other nutritional value on its own.

Canadians consume too much added sugar, especially in foods that have little or no nutritional value.

Foods that naturally contain sugar, such as vegetables, fruit and milk, also contain important nutrients for health.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends that an individual's total intake of added sugars not exceed 10% of total daily calorie (energy) intake, and ideally less than 5%. For an average 2,000-calorie-a-day diet, 10 per cent is about 48 grams, or 12 teaspoons of sugar.

*You can reduce sugar consumption by:*

- Preparing meals using fresh and staple foods.
- Limiting restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food and drink products. If eating out, choose restaurants that serve freshly made unprocessed dishes and provide nutrition information to make a healthy choice.
- Buying fresh or frozen fruit, or fruit canned in water without artificial sweeteners.
- Reducing the amount of sugar used in preparing foods in recipes.
- Avoiding sugar-loaded beverages such as soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks and juices, and ready-to-drink tea and coffee beverages. Satisfy your thirst with water.

## What are added sugars?

Added sugars are those added to foods and drinks and include glucose, fructose, sucrose, brown sugar, honey, corn syrup, maple syrup, molasses, fruit puree and juice, etc. These sugars provide extra calories but few or no nutritional benefits. Fruit juice, either as a beverage, or as a sweetener added to other foods has less nutritional value than a piece of fruit and is high in sugar. Added sugars do not include the sugars that are found naturally in foods such as vegetables, fruit, milk, grains and other plant-based foods (e.g., legumes and nuts).

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