



# MEAL PLANNING AND SHOPPING FOR HEART HEALTH

Following a healthy meal plan is an important—and enjoyable—step to help lower your risk for heart disease. Get started with the ideas and tips below.

## Meal Planning for Heart Health

**Plan your meals around these foods:**

- ▶ A wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Whole grains—aim for at least 3 servings a day
- ▶ Fat-free and low-fat dairy foods
- ▶ Skinless poultry and fish (Enjoy fish at least 2 times a week, especially types that are high in beneficial omega-3 fatty acids. Salmon, Atlantic or Pacific mackerel, lake trout, tuna, herring, and sardines are among the highest.)
- ▶ Beans (such as kidney beans, black beans, and chickpeas), lentils, and split peas
- ▶ Nuts and seeds
- ▶ Vegetable oils

**Go easy on the following:**

- ▶ Saturated fat in foods like fatty meats, poultry skin, full-fat dairy foods, and tropical oils, such as coconut and palm oils
- ▶ *Trans* fat in stick margarine, vegetable shortening, and prepared foods, such as cakes, cookies, crackers, snack foods, and commercially fried foods
- ▶ Sodium in table salt and in packaged and prepared foods, such as canned soups, lunch meats, and frozen dinners
- ▶ Added sugars in sweets (such as candy, cakes, and pies) and sugar-sweetened beverages

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### THE FIBER FACTOR

Eating foods with a type of fiber found in beans, oats, barley, nuts, brussels sprouts, citrus fruits, and apples may help lower blood cholesterol levels, which can protect against heart disease. Try these ideas to boost fiber in your meal plan:

- ▶ Start the day with a bowl of oatmeal. Or serve it for dinner as a savory side dish—cook in low-sodium broth with your favorite chopped veggies.
- ▶ Make a meatless meal of bean and vegetable chili or stuffed peppers with a lentil filling.
- ▶ Mix up some mushroom barley, black bean, lentil, or split pea soup.

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- ▶ Add orange segments to a spinach salad.
- ▶ Serve roasted brussels sprouts with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar.
- ▶ Sprinkle chopped nuts on low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
- ▶ Snack on apples spread with peanut butter or almond butter.



## Heart Healthy Grocery Shopping and Meal Prep

- ▶ Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare the nutrients in a serving of similar foods. Choose foods with more dietary fiber and less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Also choose foods labeled “0 grams *trans* fat” and without partially hydrogenated oils in the ingredient list.
- ▶ Load up on fruits and vegetables—fresh, frozen, canned, jarred, and dried are all fine. Look for plain frozen vegetables, “reduced sodium” or “no added salt” canned vegetables, canned and jarred fruits that are unsweetened or packed in their own juice, and dried fruits without added sugars.
- ▶ Choose whole-grain types of bread, cereal, rice, and pasta. Examples are 100% whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, shredded wheat, brown rice, and whole-wheat spaghetti. Or try an “ancient” grain like quinoa, buckwheat, or millet as a side dish.
- ▶ Select low-fat and fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese. Compare added sugar levels in yogurt and yogurt drinks and choose those with less added sugars.
- ▶ Choose lean meats (look for cuts with “loin” or “round” in the name) and trim off visible fat before cooking. Choose skinless poultry or remove the skin before or after cooking. Bake, broil, roast, grill, or steam instead of frying.
- ▶ Try a plant-based protein, such as tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers, and veggie crumbles.
- ▶ Pick fish that’s fresh, frozen, canned, or in pouches.
- ▶ Buy dry or canned beans, peas, and lentils. Look for reduced-sodium canned beans or rinse regular beans under cold water to reduce sodium.
- ▶ Add flavor to foods with herbs, spices, and flavored vinegars instead of salt. Choose low-sodium beef, chicken, and vegetable broth.
- ▶ For cooking and baking, choose a liquid vegetable oil like olive, canola, corn, cottonseed safflower, soybean, or sunflower oil. Avocado, peanut, and sesame oils are good choices as well.
- ▶ For spreads, buy soft tub, liquid, or spray margarines without *trans* fats rather than butter or stick margarine.
- ▶ Choose nutritious snacks, such as unsalted nuts and seeds, hummus with baby carrots, and fruit. Limit less nutritious options like chips, cookies, cakes, and candy.

### FOR MORE MEAL PLANNING AND SHOPPING TIPS...

For heart healthy recipes, meal planning ideas, and shopping tips, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and the American Heart Association website at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org).