

# Eating for Heart Health

Information for you, your family, friends, & carers

**Having a healthy balanced diet is important for keeping our heart and circulatory system strong and well. This booklet explains some of the foods and nutrients that are particularly important to consider when you are looking after your heart. If you are interested in finding out more about a general healthy balanced diet, please ask for our booklet on Eating for Good Health for more information.**

## What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is made in our bodies. It is essential for our bodies to function, however, when we eat a diet high in saturated fat, we can create too much of the wrong type of cholesterol. There are two main types of cholesterol, often referred to as good and bad cholesterol.

A high level of bad cholesterol is linked to an increased risk of heart disease; our diet can have an effect on the level of the different cholesterol in our blood.

## Saturated fat

This type of fat is found mostly in animal products such as meat, cheese, and butter and increases our bad cholesterol. We should try to reduce the amount of this type of fat in our diet.



## Mono and Polyunsaturated fats

Unsaturated fats are known as 'good fats'. They can help us decrease our 'bad' cholesterol and some can even help increase the 'good' cholesterol in our bodies.



### Good sources of polyunsaturated fats

Sunflower oil  
Corn oil  
Sunflower spread

### Good sources of monounsaturated fats

Olive oil  
Rapeseed oil  
Almonds

### HILS FACT

Did you know that *apetito* creates our meal recipes using mono and polyunsaturated fats where possible, instead of saturated fat?

**Top tip: You don't need to buy expensive cooking oils. Standard vegetable oils are often made with 100% rapeseed oil (check the label) and are usually the cheapest in the shop!**

**Top tip: Try not to add extra salt to your meal. It might take a while to get used to, but once you stop you'll never go back.**

### Ask the dietitian



### I heard I shouldn't have too many eggs. Is this true?

It is true that eggs are high in cholesterol, but cholesterol in food doesn't affect the levels in our bodies very much. It is saturated fat that can raise the levels of bad cholesterol. Unless you have been advised by a GP to limit your intake of eggs, you do not have to avoid them. Eggs are a great source of protein and B vitamins, and can be included as part of a healthy balanced diet.



### What about salt?

Eating too much salt raises blood pressure which can damage your arteries. Reducing the amount of salt in your diet can be beneficial. Our meals are carefully developed to reduce the amount of salt as much as possible, and the flavours enhanced with herbs and spices instead.

### Is oily fish good for my heart?

Oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines, are a great source of omega 3 fats. This is a special kind of fat that has been found to be very good for the heart. Try having one portion of oily fish every week. For vegetarians, walnuts and some of the healthy oils mentioned opposite are good sources.



### Can fibre help?

Soluble fibre, found in foods such as oats, fruit, and vegetables, can help lower cholesterol. Don't forget all our main meals contain at least one portion of vegetables, a great source of soluble fibre.

### Is alcohol bad for the heart?

We should generally try to limit the amount of alcohol we have. The recommendation is 2-3 units a day for men, and 1-2 units for women, with 1-2 alcohol free days each week.

Did you know? **Tuna is an oily fish if it's fresh, but not if it's tinned. The canning process strips the fish of its healthy oils. However tinned tuna in water is still a great source of protein.**



### What is a Mediterranean-style diet?

You may have been recommended to follow a Mediterranean-style diet. This is a diet rich in vegetables, wholegrains, fish, poultry, and plant based oils. Everything you need for a healthy heart.

### Our meals

The hot meals we offer have been specially designed to be well balanced and nutritious. However, we have highlighted a range of **Heart Healthy meals** on our menu, which are low in saturated fat and have a lower salt content. If you would like to choose these meals, look for the 'HH' code next to the meal choices.

## What about my weight?

Keeping your weight within a healthy range can be beneficial for the heart. If you need help to lose weight, please ask for our Achieving Healthy Weight Loss booklet.

If you are struggling to maintain your weight or you are losing weight, please get in touch with the Nutrition & Wellbeing team and we will provide further information which may be useful to you.

If you have any questions about any of the issues discussed in this booklet, please contact our Nutrition & Wellbeing Team, or speak to your GP. If you need any support with choosing options from the menu please contact your local Support Team.

*A heart healthy diet is easy to achieve with HILS*

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### **We also have a selection of additional booklets and leaflets for the following health conditions:**

Diabetes, caring for someone with dementia, feeling forgetful, good bowel health, coeliac disease, kidney problems, chewing and eating difficulties, IBS, COPD, food labelling.

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This resource has been compiled using available current evidence and has been approved by a team of dietitians and nutritionists.

The information is for general use and should not replace individual tailored advice given by a healthcare professional.

For further information, please contact your local Support Team or visit our website on [www.hertsindependentliving.org](http://www.hertsindependentliving.org) or contact us directly through [nutrition@hertsindependentliving.org](mailto:nutrition@hertsindependentliving.org) Alternatively, please call Hertfordshire Independent Living Service on **0330 2000 103** (all calls charged at local rate)