

Saturated vs. Unsaturated Fats

Saturated fats and *trans* fatty acids are the kinds of fats most likely to cause heart disease. Saturated fats are found mainly in animal products (eggs, butter, cheese, whole milk, and whole milk products), and in coconut, palm, and palm kernel oil. *Trans* fatty acids appear in foods containing hydrogenated oils like margarine and crackers. To reduce the risk of heart disease, replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats like canola oil, olive oil, flax seed oil, nuts, avocado, soy products, and nut butters. Choose margarine, cookies, crackers, and snack foods that do not contain *trans* fats or hydrogenated oils (read the label).

Is Cholesterol Found in Foods Vegetarians Eat?

Cholesterol is found in foods from animals. Eggs and dairy products do have cholesterol. Grains, legumes, nuts, fruits, vegetables, and vegetable oils do not have cholesterol or only contain insignificant amounts. We do not need any cholesterol in our diets since our bodies can make all the cholesterol we need.

Sodium

On average, the higher a person's sodium intake, the higher his or her blood pressure will be. For most people, processed foods are the largest source of sodium. So read food labels. Try to stay below 2,300 milligrams of sodium daily.

Look for reduced-sodium or no-salt-added versions of foods you eat often like tomato sauce, pasta sauce, canned soup, crackers, snack foods, canned vegetables, catsup, or vegetable juice.

Fiber

Fiber is found only in plant foods. A vegetarian diet featuring fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, and dried beans will be high in fiber. Oats, carrots, fruits, and beans are especially high in one kind of fiber that helps to lower blood cholesterol.

How Much Fat Should We Eat?

Experts do not agree about the ideal level of dietary fat and, in fact, there may not be just one ideal level. A reasonable goal for most people would be to have saturated fat providing no more than 8-10% of calories and a total fat intake between 15 and 30% of total calories.

Fat intakes at the higher end of this range, when the fat is monounsaturated fat (nuts, seeds, olive oil, canola oil, avocado), may be a better choice than restriction of all types of dietary fat. Fat should not be limited in children younger than 2 years. After 2 years, children should gradually limit dietary fat so that by around age 5 and beyond, between 20 and 30% of calories come from fat.

What does 30% or less of calories from fat mean?

If you usually eat this many calories:	Your fat intake should be no more than:	Your saturated fat intake should be no more than:
1600	53 grams	18 grams
2000	66 grams	22 grams

Fat in Selected Vegetarian Foods

Food	Saturated fat (gm)	Fat (gm)
Butter, 1 pat	2.5	4
Margarine, soft, 1 pat	0-1	4
Salad dressing, creamy, 2 Tbsp	1-2	10
Vegetable oil, 1 Tbsp	1	14
Nuts and seeds, 1 oz	2	16
Peanut butter, 1 Tbsp	1	8
Cooked beans, 1 cup	0	1
Egg, 1 large	1.5	5
Fat-free milk, 1 cup	Trace	Trace
Soy milk, 1 cup	0	3-5
Whole milk, 1 cup	5	8
Cheese, 3 oz	18	28
Fruit, 1 medium	0	0
Grains, cooked, 1 cup	0	1
Vegetables, 1 cup	0	0-1
Bread, 1 slice	Trace	1
Potato chips, 1 oz	3	10
French fries, 10	2	8
Olive, 1 large	Trace	<1
Avocado, half	2	15

Cholesterol in Vegetarian Foods

Food	Cholesterol (mg)
Butter, 1 pat	11
Egg, 1 large	212
Nonfat milk, 1 cup	4
Whole milk, 1 cup	33
Cheese, 3 oz	90
Soy milk, fruit, vegetables, grains, dried beans, nuts	0

Vitamin B12

Adequacy of vitamin B12 appears to be important in reducing heart disease risk.

To insure adequate intakes of vitamin B12, vegetarians who eat few or no animal-derived products should use a reliable source of vitamin B12 like fortified breakfast cereal, fortified soy milk, Vegetarian Support Formula nutritional yeast, other fortified foods such as some veggie burgers, or a vitamin B12 supplement daily.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

DHA and EPA are both omega-3 fatty acids that appear to play a role in heart health. Our bodies are able to convert the fatty acid, alpha-linolenic acid, into DHA which is used to make EPA. In order to maximize production of DHA and EPA, include good sources of alpha-linolenic acid such as flaxseed and flaxseed oil, tofu, walnuts, and canola oil. There are vegan DHA supplements and some fortified foods containing DHA derived from microalgae.

What Else?

Vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and flavonoids also appear to be important in the prevention of heart disease. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits and juices, cantaloupe, broccoli, and tomatoes. Vegetable oils, dark green vegetables, nuts, avocados, and whole grains provide generous amounts of vitamin E. Good sources of beta-carotene include orange and dark yellow vegetables like carrots, winter squash, and pumpkin. Flavonoids are found in fruits, vegetables, grape juice, and tea. Nuts and soy products appear to reduce risk of heart disease.



Putting It All Together

Use this menu as a starting point to develop your own heart healthy plan. Adjust for your own needs.

BREAKFAST

2 slices whole grain bread^{F,LF}
1 medium orange^{F,LS,LF}
1 cup whole grain cereal^{F,LF}
1 cup enriched soy milk^{LS,LF}

LUNCH

Hummus (homemade with 3/4 cup unsalted or rinsed chickpeas and 2 teaspoons tahini)^{F,LS,LF} on Large whole-grain pita bread^{F,LF} with chopped tomatoes^{F,LS,LF} and shredded lettuce^{F,LS,LF}
Large apple^{F,LS,LF}

DINNER

1 cup whole-grain pasta^{F,LS,LF} with 1/4 cup reduced sodium marinara sauce^{LS,LF}
1/3 cup carrot sticks^{F,LS,LF}
1 cup of broccoli^{F,LS,LF} sautéed in 1 teaspoon canola oil^L
1 wedge of cantaloupe^{F,LS,LF}
A juice pop made with 1 cup frozen grape juice^{LS,LF}

SNACKS

1/2 cup trail mix (mix of dates, raisins, and at least 3 tablespoons of walnuts)^{F,LS,L}
1 cup enriched soy milk^{LS,LF}

This menu provides 2000 calories, 20-30% fat, less than 8% of calories from saturated fat, and less than 2300 milligrams of sodium. It meets recommendations for protein and fiber. Superscripts indicate attributes of each menu item: F – fiber, L – linolenic acid, LS – low sodium, and LF – low-fat.

This brochure is not personal medical advice, which should be obtained from your health care provider.

