



Providing expert support,
education and influence

Cholesterol SMART[®] Healthy Eating Guide



HEART UK
THE CHOLESTEROL CHARITY

Lowering Cholesterol, Saving Lives

www.heartuk.org.uk



Cholesterol SMART[®]



Cholesterol SMART is HEART UK's step-by-step guide to help manage your cholesterol and triglyceride levels and protect your heart. It focuses on healthy fats (like vegetable oils and spreads, nuts, seeds, oily fish), more fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, and beans, and less saturated fat. Red and processed meat, tropical fats and full-fat dairy are eaten less often, with easy swaps suggested.

Your Cholesterol SMART[®] Shopping Essentials

Plan ahead and get inspired using our top tips below.

- ✓ **Fruit & Veg:** Aim for a rainbow of colours: fresh, frozen, canned (in juice or water), or dried.
- ✓ **Cholesterol Busters:**
 - **Nuts** (unsalted, unsweetened): All varieties including peanuts.
 - **Oats:** Oat breakfast biscuits or flakes, oat cakes, and/or **pearl barley**.
 - **Beans** (all varieties including soya), peas & lentils (fresh, frozen, or canned).
 - Foods fortified with **plant stanols or sterols**: Choose from yogurts, mini-shot drinks or spreads.
- ✓ **Healthy Fats:** Vegetable, nut or seed oils & spreads (**avoid coconut/palm**).
- ✓ **Dairy:** Low-fat or unsweetened fortified plant-based alternatives (**avoid coconut varieties**).
- ✓ **Wholegrains:** Wholemeal or seeded bread, wholewheat pasta, and brown, black or red rice.
- ✓ **Wholegrain Breakfast Cereals:** Such as porridge, bran flakes, wheat biscuits or unsweetened muesli.
- ✓ **Fish:** Including oily fish – canned, frozen or fresh!



Understanding Nutrition Labels

Visit us online for easy tips

www.heartuk.org.uk/cholesterol-smart/food-labels or scan the QR code





Cholesterol
SMART®



Is Your Diet Cholesterol SMART®?

Check out how you score on our Cholesterol SMART checklist and then decide where you can improve.

Tick the boxes that apply to you	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do you have at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day? A portion is roughly a handful.			
Do you eat wholegrain foods most days instead of refined (white) carbs? (E.g., wholemeal bread or chapatti, wholegrain breakfast cereals or oats, wholewheat pasta and brown rice).			
Do you eat three or more portions of beans or lentils every week? One portion is 6 tbsp (½ large or 1 small can).			
Do you use rapeseed, olive, sunflower or other vegetable, nut or seed oils and spreads as your main fats for cooking, spreading and dressings? Coconut or palm fats don't count!			
Do you keep processed and fatty meat to a minimum – once a week or less? E.g., sausages, bacon, ham, sausage rolls, pies, fatty red meat or poultry with skin.			
Do you keep your red meat intake down, three servings a week or less? A serving is roughly the size of a deck of cards and could fit in your palm.			
Do you usually choose low fat milk and yogurt or plant-based alternatives? Coconut doesn't count!			
Do you have fast food, take-aways or ready meals less than twice a week?			
Do you usually choose water or unsweetened/sugar-free drinks instead of sugary drinks?			

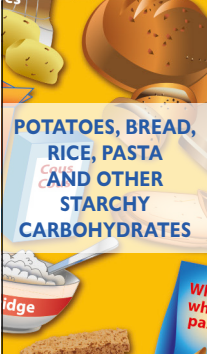
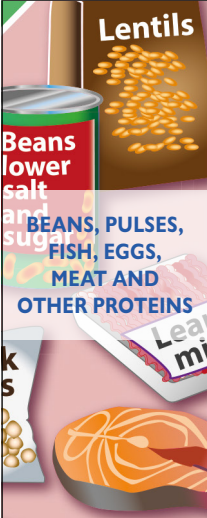
If you answered mostly **YES** - well done, carry on. Where you answered **NO** or **SOMETIMES** - these are areas you can change or improve on.

Take our full [Diet Quiz](#) online for your score, top tips and personalised advice you can save and return to any time.



Your Guide to Healthy Eating

Dietary advice to help lower your cholesterol (and triglycerides*) and help keep your heart healthy.

Food Group	Key Message	Best Choice	Occasionally	Best Avoided
 FRUIT AND VEG	Eat at least 5 or more portions everyday. Choose a wide variety.	Fresh, frozen, dried, canned fruit and vegetables ♥ Canned in natural juices and water. Vegetable based soups (without cream).	Canned fruit in syrup (drain the syrup), fruit juice.	Coleslaw, vegetables fried in batter (onion rings etc.), pakoras and samosas.
 POTATOES, BREAD, RICE, PASTA AND OTHER STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES	Eat more ♣ wholegrains and high fibre versions.	♣ Wholegrain varieties of bread, chapatti without fat, pitta bread, flour tortillas, bagel, pasta, rice, noodles. ♣ Wholegrain breakfast cereals, ♥ oats, couscous, pearl barley, bulger wheat, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam and plantain.	Naan bread, paratha, roast potatoes, oven chips.	Garlic bread, croissants, waffles, puris, pilau, biryani and fried rice. Sugar and chocolate coated breakfast cereals. Deep fried chips, pizza with fatty meat or too much cheese.
		Breadsticks, rye crispbreads, water biscuits, plain rice cakes, fruit teacakes, crumpets, malt bread, wholemeal English muffins.	Crackers and semi-sweet biscuits (check label for lowest saturated fat content), homemade cakes and puddings (using best choice ingredients) such as carrot cake, muffins, cereal bars, fruit loaves, fruit based puddings.	Cakes, pasties, sweet pastries, pies, steamed and sponge puddings, doughnuts, filled or coated fancy biscuits, shortbread.
		Plain popcorn.	Baked crisps, low fat crisps.	Crisps, cheese snacks, cheese crackers, bombay mix.
 LENTILS BEANS, PULSES, FISH, EGGS, MEAT AND OTHER PROTEINS	Eat more beans and pulses. 2 portions of fish per week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat, and no more than 500g cooked weight a week.	♥ Pulses including baked beans, peas, kidney beans, chick peas, lentils. Rinse if canned in salt/sugar. Reduced fat hummus.	Hummus.	
		♥ Soya products such as soya mince, soya / edamame beans, tofu, soya nuts and plain Quorn pieces, mince and fillets.	Vegetarian sausages and burgers - check the label: Choose only those that are green or amber for saturated fat and salt.	Vegetarian/vegan meat alternatives with added coconut or palm fat. Ready meals high in saturated fat. Check the labels.
		All fish and shellfish FH . Oily fish ♣ include fresh/canned mackerel, sardines, pilchards, salmon, trout and herrings.	Canned fish in oil (drain oil), fish in batter (remove batter), fish fingers, fish cakes.	Seafood in rich creamy or cheesy sauces such as Hollandaise, lobster, Marie Rose sauce.
		Eggs boiled, scrambled, poached. 3-4 a week FH .	Fried eggs and omelettes ♠.	Quiche, scotch eggs, cheese omelettes.
		♥ Nuts and nut butters (without added palm or coconut fat), all seeds (flaxseed, chia, sunflower, pumpkin, sesame etc).	Nut and seed bars.	Salted, sweetened or chocolate coated nuts, nut and seed butter with more than 10% saturated fat.
		Lean pork, extra lean mince. Kidney FH . Chicken and turkey without skin. Veal, rabbit, game, ostrich.	Small portions of lean beef, lamb, bacon, low fat sausages, low fat burgers, liver FH , coated meat, meatballs. Read labels to find lowest saturated fat versions.	Fatty cuts of meat - beef, belly pork, lamb, mutton, duck, goose. Processed meats, sausages, streaky bacon, lardons, salami, sausage rolls, pies, pasties, chicken Kiev.
 DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES	Choose lower fat and lower sugar options.	Skimmed milk, 1% milk, buttermilk, unsweetened and fortified soya ♥ and other plant-based drinks - except coconut.	Semi-skimmed milk (2%), reduced fat evaporated milk, sweetened, fortified plain plant drinks (except coconut), and reduced fat canned coconut milk.	Full fat cows, sheeps or goats milk. Evaporated or condensed milk. All coconut milk alternatives, including full fat canned varieties.
		Low fat, low sugar yogurt or fortified and unsweetened soya, oat and nut alternatives to yogurt. Virtually fat free fromage frais. Yogurts and mini drinks with added plant sterols/stanols ♥.	Fromage Frais.	Full fat, thick and creamy yogurts. Coconut yogurt alternatives.
		Low fat and reduced fat cheese such as cottage, curd, quark, ricotta, extra light cheese spread. Soft nut vegan cheeses.	Modest portions of medium fat cheese e.g., reduced fat cheddar, edam, brie, camembert, soft goat's cheese, mozzarella, feta, paneer. Light cheese spread.	High fat cheese e.g., cream cheese, mascarpone, stilton, cheddar, gouda, parmesan, fried paneer. Full fat cheese spread. Vegan hard and semi-hard cheeses made with coconut or palm oil e.g., cheddar, Parmesan, brie style. Check the ingredients list.
 OILS AND SPREADS	Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and use in small amounts.	Olive, rapeseed, sunflower, soya, corn, nut and seed oils.		Partially hydrogenated vegetable oil on food labels. Oils that have been reheated several times. Palm, coconut, shea fats and oils.
		Spreads made from vegetable, nut or seed oils such as sunflower or olive oil. Spreads with added plant sterols/stanols ♥.		Butter, lard, suet, dripping, ghee, hard cooking fats. Vegan butter-style blocks.
 SUGARY, SALTY AND FATTY FOODS	Eat sugary, salty and fatty foods less often.	Sugar free jelly, sweeteners.	Small portions of dark chocolate, boiled sweets, gums, honey, jam, marmalade, sorbet, low fat or non-dairy ice cream.	Milk/white chocolate, fudge, toffee, sugar, treacle, syrup, Indian sweets, meringue, cheesecake, trifle, full fat dairy ice cream.
		Pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice, garlic, chutney and pickles made with minimum oil.	Reduced salt soy sauce and stocks.	Salt, garlic salt, celery salt, soy sauce, oily pickles.
		Use lemon juice, vinegar, herbs, yogurt, olive oil for salad dressings. Thicken sauces and gravies with flour or tomato puree. Tomato based sauces and ketchup.	Salad cream and mayonnaise (use light/low calorie versions where possible), half-fat crème fraiche, oat and soya alternatives to cream (free from coconut oil - check the label).	Rich sauces made with butter, cream or full cream milk. Cream: clotted, double, whipping, soured or single. Crème fraiche. Cream alternatives made with coconut fat.
 DRINKS	6-8 cups/glasses per day.	Tap, mineral or soda water, tea, coffee with low fat milk or unsweetened plant-based drinks (except coconut), no sugar/syrup. Sugar free/diet squashes and fizzy drinks.	Fruit juice and smoothies - no more than 150ml per day. Alcohol ☹.	Where sugar or syrup is added: squash, fizzy drinks, flavoured waters, energy drinks, hot drinks. Drinks using coconut milk alternatives.

Labelling	Nutrient	Low	Medium	High	
				per 100g (per 100ml)	per serving* food (drinks)
Per 100g of food (per 100ml of drink)	Total Fat	3g or less (1.5g or less)	3g-17.5g (1.5g-8.75g)	More than 17.5g (more than 8.75g)	More than 21g (more than 10.5g)
	Saturates	1.5g or less (0.75g or less)	1.5g-5g (0.75g-2.5g)	More than 5g (more than 2.5g)	More than 6g (more than 3g)
	Total Sugars	5g or less (2.5g or less)	5g-22.5g (2.5g-11.25g)	More than 22.5g (more than 11.25g)	More than 27g (more than 13.5g)
	Salt	0.3g or less (0.3g or less)	0.3g-1.5g (0.3g- 0.75g)	More than 1.5g (more than 0.75g)	More than 1.8g (more than 0.9g)
ADULT'S DAILY REFERENCE INTAKE – Total Fat: less than 70g. Saturates: less than 20g. Total sugars: 90g. Salt: less than 6g. This information is intended as a guide only and is not individual advice. *If a serving is more than 100g for food and more than 150ml for drinks.					

KEY SYMBOLS AND NOTES						
 Wholegrains	 Oily fish	 Cholesterol lowering foods	 Alcohol	 Cooking with fat	FH Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (FH)	 Fruit and vegetables
Packed with the goodness from the whole grain they are higher in fibre, vitamins and minerals than their refined equivalents. People with healthy hearts tend to eat more wholegrains.	Rich in omega 3 fats which help your heart beat more regularly and prevent your blood from clotting. Aim for at least one portion (140g) per week.	Foods fortified with plant sterols and stanols, nuts, oats and soluble fibre from pulses, vegetables and fruits.	Keep to sensible limits. For men and women no more than 14 units per week, avoid binge drinking, have alcohol-free days each week. Women who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding should avoid any alcohol.	We all need some fat but too much can cause weight gain. When you cook with fat choose heart healthy vegetable oils more often and use small amounts. For less fat - steam, microwave, poach, boil and casserole.	If you have FH you may be sensitive to the effects of foods high in cholesterol such as egg yolks, kidney, liver, shellfish. Speak to a dietitian or doctor about limiting your intake of these.	A portion is (a handful): one large (apple, orange, tomato); 2 small (plums, satsumas, beetroot); a handful (grapes, strawberries, sprouts); a heaped tablespoon dried fruit; 150ml, 100% unsweetened fruit juice or smoothie (counts as a maximum of 1 portion a day); 3 tablespoons vegetables/ chopped fruit; a small bowl of salad; 3 heaped tablespoons of pulses and beans (counts as a maximum of 1 portion a day).
*Triglycerides are a type of fat. The amount of triglyceride in the blood rises after a meal and then slowly decreases. If your triglyceride levels remain high after a meal you may be asked to reduce the amount of sugar, alcohol or fat in your diet.						



Where can I find out more?

Our range of materials include our Healthy Eating Guide, Blood Fats Explained and Familial Hypercholesterolaemia booklets. There are web pages on a range of topics on our website including foods that help lower cholesterol, healthy oils and fats and handy tips for eating out.

General enquiries

hello@heartuk.org.uk

Literature orders

literature@heartuk.org.uk

Email or call our Cholesterol Helpline

ask@heartuk.org.uk
0345 450 5988

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There are many ways you can raise funds for HEART UK. Visit our website for more information.

National Cholesterol Month

October is National Cholesterol Month - a whole month devoted to raising awareness and funds for HEART UK.

Visit our website

You can find out more on our website at www.heartuk.org.uk

Check out our frequently asked questions, recipe ideas, what your cholesterol and triglyceride numbers mean and sign up to our free monthly e-newsletter for more facts and tips to help you.

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