

EAT WELL FOR YOUR HEART

Some of the most important actions you can take to improve heart health involve your diet. What you eat can affect blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and play a role in weight management.

This chapter will help you make food choices and develop eating habits to better your heart health.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Your diet and eating habits contribute to your heart health in many ways. This chapter will help you learn:

- Steps to healthier food choices
- How to plan for healthy eating by:
 - Balancing your plate with fruits and vegetables, whole grains and heart healthy proteins
 - Planning meals and cooking more often
 - Reading food labels
- How to eat mindfully, being aware of how, what and why you are eating, to help make long-lasting dietary changes



STEPS TO A HEALTHIER HEART

Some of the most important actions you can take to improve heart health involve your diet and eating habits. What you eat, where you eat, how much you eat, and how you prepare foods play an important role in heart health.

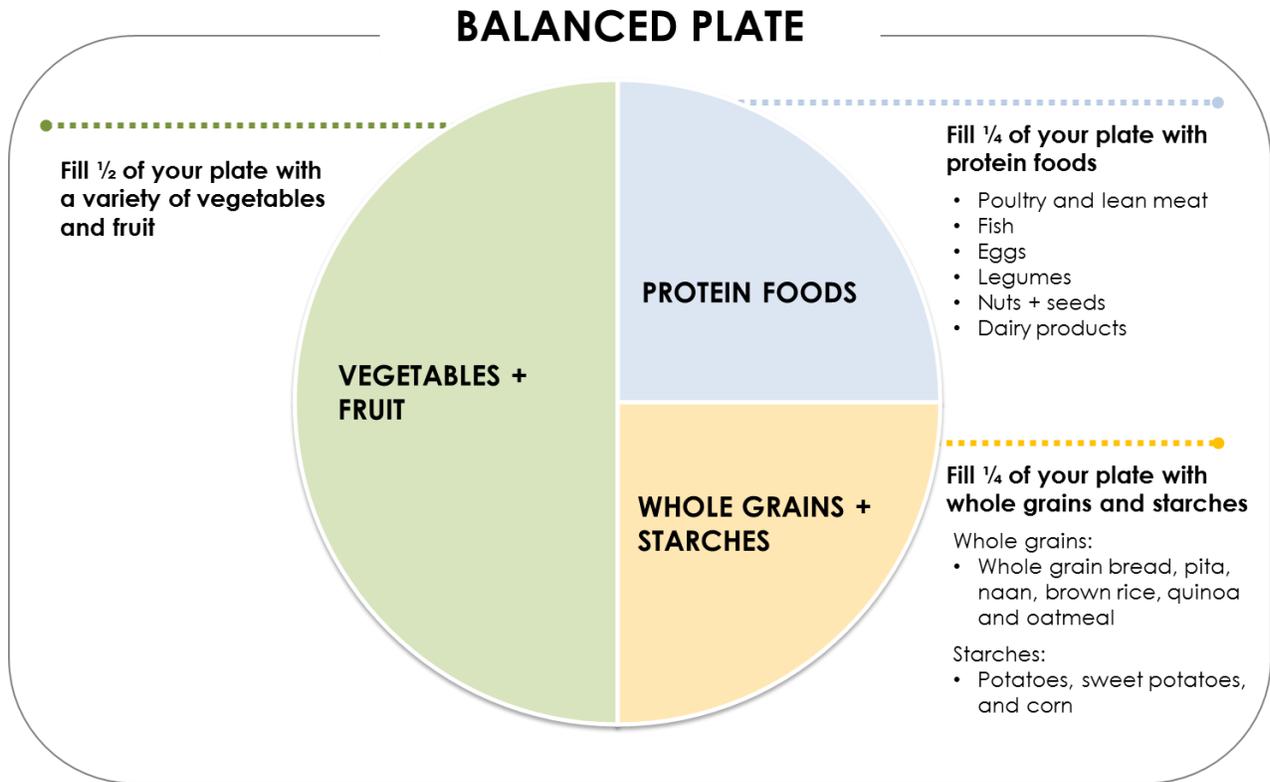
Research has shown that eating mostly plant-based foods, heart-healthy proteins, and unsaturated fats can help you live longer and make you less likely to develop new heart problems or other conditions such as diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and diverticulosis (to name a few). The fewer health problems you experience, the more likely you can keep doctors' visits and hospitalizations to a minimum, leaving you more time and energy to enjoy the life you want to live.

The simple steps listed below (and discussed in more detail throughout this chapter) will help guide you in making healthy food choices for your heart:

- **Eat more vegetables and fruit**
Vegetables and fruits are loaded with nutrients like fibre, potassium, and vitamins which help protect you from a range of heart problems.
- **Choose more whole grains**
Whole grains are a good source of fibre, iron, and B vitamins. Eating more whole grains can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes.
- **Add-in heart-healthy proteins**
Adding plant-based proteins to your diet can improve heart health as they are high in fibre and have limited saturated fat.
- **Cook more often**
Planning meals and cooking more often will improve your confidence and skills in the kitchen while making it easier to choose heart healthier foods.
- **Reduce highly processed foods**
Aim to limit quantities or find substitutions for highly processed foods as they are higher in saturated fat, sugar, and sodium.
- **Eat mindfully and find satisfaction in food**
Eating foods that you enjoy, appreciating the food and the way it makes your body feel, and finding satisfaction in what you eat will ensure dietary changes you make are long-lasting.

Remember to pace yourself. You don't have to change your whole way of eating to get health benefits. Starting with one or two changes will feel more manageable and lead to lasting changes over time. Give yourself some time to turn these new changes into habits and, when you are ready, move on to make further changes.

BALANCING YOUR PLATE



Consider how the amount of food on your plate usually looks – are they similar or different to the balanced plate shown above? Consider what changes you could make to work towards a more balanced plate. Remember, progress, not perfection is always the goal!

The size of the plate will vary based on things like your gender, age, activity level and hunger at a meal. Focus on filling your plate following the proportions shown on the balanced plate as a guide and eat until you achieve a level of comfortable fullness. We will explore this idea of 'mindful eating' later in the chapter.

EAT MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

One of the most important things you can do for your heart health is to eat more vegetables and fruit. These nutrient-packed foods:

- Provide your body with important vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help protect you from health problems
- Are rich sources of potassium – a nutrient that helps lower blood pressure
- Contain fibre to help manage blood sugar and cholesterol levels and can help to manage your hunger by keeping you feeling fuller longer.

HOW MUCH TO EAT?

Include plenty of vegetables and fruit in your meals and snacks. Aim to fill half your plate at each meal with vegetables and fruits.

CHOOSING VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

There is no “best” choice of vegetable or fruit instead, seek a greater variety. A good plan is to have at least two different colours of vegetables or fruits on your plate.

Fresh, frozen and canned are all equally nutritious choices. Frozen and canned can be convenient and economical choices compared to fresh produce. When choosing frozen or canned, look at ingredient labels and choose those without added sugars, salt, or seasonings/sauces.

Dried fruit and fruit juices are more concentrated in sugars and many have added or ‘free’ sugars. For this reason, choose water over juice, aim for smaller portions of dried fruit, and choose less often than other types of vegetables and fruit.

EASY WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR INTAKE

- Add vegetables to your omelette or scrambled eggs
- Add spinach to your morning smoothie
- Add fresh or frozen fruit to your oatmeal, yogurt, and pancakes
- Make two vegetable choices for dinner – if you take a spoonful of each, it will increase the variety and make it easier to achieve a half plate of vegetables
- Snack on raw vegetables while you’re preparing meals
- Use pre-washed and prepared options such as bagged salads, vegetable or fruit trays, and chopped vegetables to decrease prep time in the kitchen

- Add a salad as an appetizer to a meal
- Wash, chop and refrigerate or freeze vegetables when you are preparing for a meal to reduce prep time for future meals
- Add frozen vegetables to casseroles and soups
- Mix spiralized vegetable noodles or spaghetti squash into your pasta dishes
- Find ways to make your vegetables taste good – experiment with new ways of preparing vegetables or new seasonings

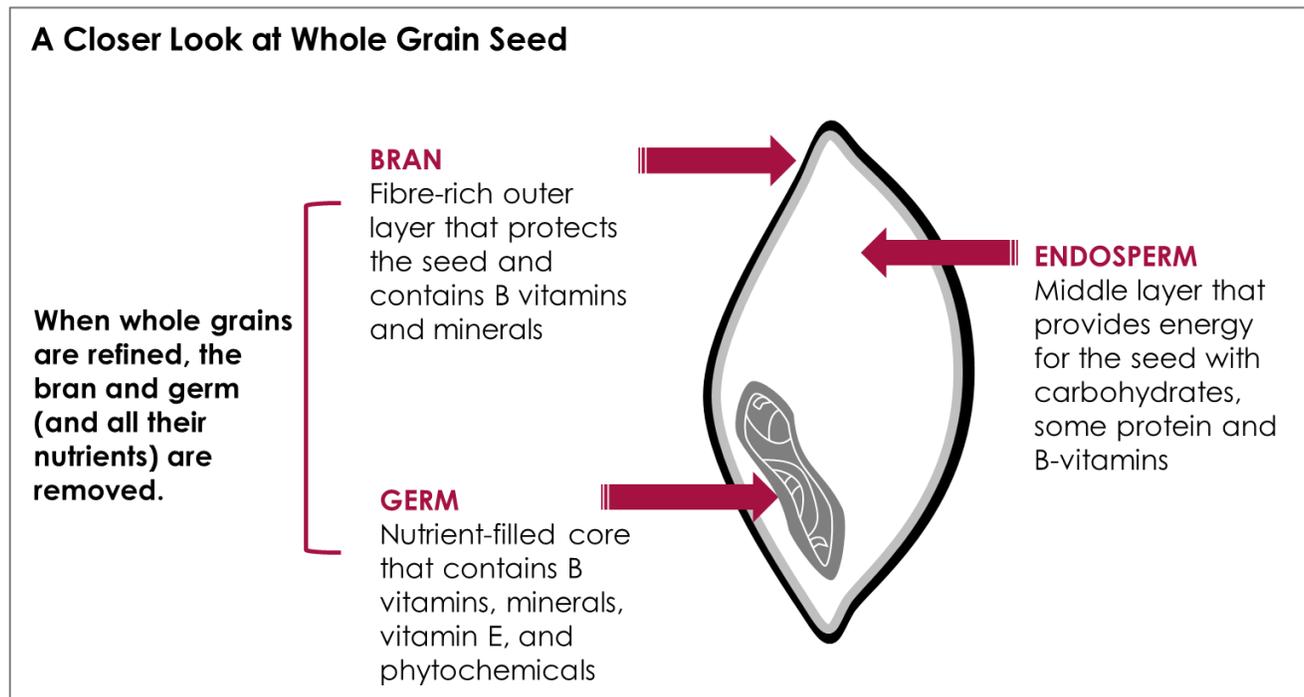
Did you know?

Approximately 45% of food waste comes from vegetables and fruits. Many people buy vegetables and fruits with good intentions but don't make a plan to use them.

Meal planning is the number one way to ensure you eat more vegetables and prevent food waste. See the 'Cook More Often' section for more information on meal planning.

CHOOSE MORE WHOLE GRAINS

Whole grains contain all three parts of the grain – the bran, germ, and endosperm. Refined grains only use the endosperm which provides carbohydrates for energy but limited fibre and nutrients. Consuming whole grain foods can help increase fullness, reduce cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and manage blood sugars.



LABEL READING FOR WHOLE GRAINS

Identifying whole grain bread, crackers, and other foods are easy if you know what to look for:

- ✓ Check the ingredient list – look for the word 'whole grain' in the first ingredient.*
- ✓ Claims like “multi-grain”, “100% wheat”, and “12 grain” do not necessarily refer to whole grain products. If the first ingredient is enriched flour or just flour, it is not a whole grain food.
- ✓ Colour gives no indication of whether a product is whole grain or not.

Most crackers, cookies, muffins, and many types of breads are refined grains. Eating them occasionally won't hurt but try to make most of your grain choices whole grains.

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE LABEL: ENRICHED IS NOT WHOLE GRAIN

INGREDIENTS: ENRICHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE {VITAMIN B1}, RIBOFLAVIN {VITAMIN B2}, FOLIC ACID), ORGANIC CANE SUGAR, GRAHAM FLOUR, SOYBEAN AND/OR PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED COTTONSEED OIL, BROWN SUGAR,

*Sprouted grains do not always state whole before the grain type but are in fact whole grains

WHOLE GRAINS	REFINED GRAINS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown or wild rice • Quinoa • Barley* • Bulgur • Whole wheat pasta and couscous • Whole grain cereals, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Oatmeal* – All-Bran™ Buds* – Cheerios™* • Whole grain bread and bread products, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bread, buns, tortillas, rotis, English muffins – Pancakes, waffles • Whole wheat flour • Whole grain crackers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Triscuits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White rice • White pasta • Couscous • Refined grain cereals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Corn Flakes® – Special K® – Rice Krispies® • Refined grain crackers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ritz crackers – Soda crackers • White bread and bread products, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bread, buns, tortillas, rotis, English muffins – Pancakes, waffles • White flour muffins, doughnuts, pastries • White all-purpose flour

**Indicates sources of soluble fibre which has been shown to reduce cholesterol*

HOW MUCH TO EAT?

At each meal, whole grains should take up ¼ of your plate (refer back to the 'Balancing Your Plate' section).

Some people prefer the taste or texture of refined grains over whole grains, such as white rice over brown rice. A good way to adapt to new texture is by mixing whole and refined grains half and half. It's okay to use refined grains for some dishes but aim for most of your daily grains to be whole grain.

EASY WAYS TO EAT MORE WHOLE GRAINS

- Snack on whole grain baked pita chips or crackers with hummus
- Make a large batch of oatmeal at the beginning of the week, store in a container in the fridge, and reheat for a quick and convenient breakfast

- Use All-Bran™ Buds or oatmeal as a binder when making hamburgers or meatloaf or crush them to use as a breading
- Add barley, quinoa or brown rice to your salad
- Have some air-popped popcorn as a snack
- Swap out half of the flour in a recipe for whole wheat

PANTRY CHECK

Look at the grain products you have in your pantry and check off whether they are whole grain or not. For ones that are not whole grain, refer to the table on the previous page for ideas of whole grain options you might like to try instead.

PANTRY ITEM	IS IT WHOLE GRAIN?			
Cold cereal you eat most often	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Regular hot cereal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Favourite bread	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Crackers you eat most often	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Flour used most in baking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Pasta you eat the most	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Rice you eat regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

ADD-IN HEART-HEALTHY PROTEIN OPTIONS

Protein comes from a variety of sources including meat, fish, eggs, legumes, nuts, and dairy products. Choose a variety of these protein sources including fish at least twice per week and plant-based protein options more often.

CHOOSING HEART-HEALTHY PROTEINS

Legumes, Tofu and Soy-Based Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes dried and canned beans, lentils, peas and chickpeas, tofu and vegetarian meat substitute, edamame beans, and hummus or bean dips.• When choosing canned legumes, look for no-salt-added varieties or rinse well under water to reduce sodium content.• Legumes are high fibre and low in saturated fat. Aim to incorporate legumes 2-4 times per week.
Nuts and Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes whole nuts and seeds and nut or seed butter.• Choose unsalted nuts and natural nut butter most often.• Nuts and seeds contain healthy unsaturated fat and fibre.• Aim to eat nuts and seeds 4 or more times per week.
Fish and Seafood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes fresh, frozen or canned fish and seafood.• Fatty fish such as salmon, trout, mackerel, and sardines are higher in omega-3 fats which have additional heart healthy benefits.• Aim to eat fish 2 or more times per week.
Dairy Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes lower fat milk, yogurt, kefir, cottage cheese, and cheese.• Cheese, even light cheese, is higher in saturated fat compared to other dairy products. It can still be part of a heart healthy diet but try to limit the quantity (1 serving equals 1.5 oz or the size of 4 dice) or how often you eat it.• Soy and pea milk are dairy alternatives whose protein content is similar to dairy milk. Other alternatives including almond, cashew, coconut, and oat milk are low in protein. When choosing dairy alternatives, look for ones that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes poultry, beef, pork, lamb, and game meat. • Choose leaner cuts of meat, remove the skin, and trim visible fat. • Choose unprocessed fresh or frozen meat without added breading, seasoning, or marinades most often. Add your own flavouring to improve taste and texture. • Limit red meat (beef, pork and lamb) to 1-2 times/week and limit processed meat (deli meats) to 1 or less times per week.
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes whole eggs, egg whites, and liquid egg products. • Enjoy a variety of protein foods, including a moderate amount of eggs if you like.

HOW MUCH TO EAT?

You don't need large amounts of protein foods to meet your needs. Aim for ¼ of your plate to be protein foods and choose protein foods as part of your snacks.

EASY WAYS TO CHOOSE HEART-HEALTHY PROTEIN:

- Add edamame beans to salads and stir-fries
- Mix lentils into ground meats
- Use hummus as a dip for vegetables or a sandwich spread
- Snack on roasted chickpeas
- Use canned salmon or tuna as an easy sandwich filler or salad topper
- Add nuts or seeds to homemade baking
- Sprinkle beans into your usual favourite meals – into omelets, on top of pizzas, into casseroles, soups
- Use plain Greek yogurt to make creamy salad dressings or pasta sauces
- Use kefir as the liquid in your smoothie or add soft tofu for a protein boost
- Use leftover roasted meat instead of deli meat in a sandwich

Facts About Fats

Saturated fat is a type of fat found mostly in animal products (meat, butter or lard, cheese, etc.) and tropical oils including palm and coconut oil.

Excess saturated fat increases LDL (bad) cholesterol and heart disease risk. Choosing heart healthy proteins such as plant-based proteins and fish more often will reduce your saturated fat intake.

COOK MORE OFTEN

There are many benefits to cooking more often including eating healthier and saving money. Cooking doesn't have to be complicated. With a little planning and some basic skills, you can cook heart-healthy meals and snacks.

MEAL PLANNING

Cooking at home allows you to have more control over your food choices and reduces your intake of processed food. But without a plan you may find yourself stressed about trying to put together a meal at the last-minute, leading to eating out more often.

Following a pre-built meal plan isn't sustainable as it doesn't consider your food preferences, schedule, or lifestyle. Instead, creating your own meal plans allows you to eat healthier, reduce time stress in the kitchen and save money. Meal planning is a skill. It takes time to master and you will come across challenges along the way but, with practice, it becomes easier. Use these tips to help in your meal planning.

Assess your week	Plan 15-minute meals or prep ahead of time for evenings you have limited time to cook.
Cook once and use twice	Leftovers are a great way to save time. Simply reheat leftovers or re-use items from one meal in another dish (e.g. stir-fry vegetables can be used in fajitas).
Batch cook	Make large portions and stock your freezer with items like lasagnas, spaghetti sauces, pre-cooked rice, etc.
Multi-task	While dinner is cooking, prepare lunches or snacks for the next day or chop vegetables for later in the week.
Create master lists	Thinking of ideas for meals can be overwhelming. Keep an ongoing list of your recipe and meal ideas to reference.
Use shortcuts	Use pre-chopped or frozen vegetables to save time preparing meals.
Stock-up on staples	Keep fridge, freezer, and pantry staples on hand to create quick meals when you don't have a plan.
Consider the balanced plate	Meals don't have to be elaborate to be healthy. Think back to the balanced plate model and consider easy ways you can fill the plate with foods you have on hand.

Sample Meal Plan

Kitchen staples allow you to make quick, balanced meals

When a recipe won't use an entire ingredient (e.g. canned black beans) look at your master list for another recipe that uses the same ingredient



	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Lunch	Egg salad sandwich + raw vegetable + hummus	Salmon on tossed salad with whole grain bun	Chicken + black bean burrito bowl	Leftover chili and salad
Dinner	Salmon, brown rice + broccoli	Chicken stir-fry	Black bean chili with salad	Shrimp tacos



<p>Cook once and reuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuse rice in a stir-fry and burrito bowl later in the week • Chop extra broccoli to use in stir-fry • Top a salad with leftover salmon the next day 	<p>Batch cook meals that freeze well to provide quick meals on days you don't have time to cook</p>	<p>Plan 15-minute meals on nights you have activities or get home late</p>
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FATS THAT SUPPORT HEALTH

Fats are essential for our health. They provide energy and are necessary for absorbing fat-soluble vitamins. They also flavour our foods and slow digestion to keep us full longer. A heart-healthy diet is not a low-fat diet. Instead, replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats can help reduce cholesterol and cardiovascular disease risk.

Healthy fats include mono and polyunsaturated fats which come from:

- Plant-based oils or spreads including olive oil, canola oil, avocado oil, etc.
- Nuts, seeds and nut/seed butter
- Avocado
- Olives
- Fatty fish

The following tips can help you to add unsaturated fats into your meals and snacks:

- **Heart Healthy Fats:**
 - Add olive oil to diced vegetables and roast them in the oven or grill
 - Make your own salad dressings with liquid oils

- **Nuts and Seeds:**
 - Top pancakes, French toast or waffles with peanut butter
 - Sprinkle ground flaxseed into your yogurt, smoothies, or cereal
 - Snack on roasted mixed nut and seeds
- **Vegetables and Fruit:**
 - Add chopped olives to your pizza, salad, or sandwich
 - Add avocado to sandwiches in place of butter
- **Fish:**
 - Use canned salmon or tuna as a protein addition to salads

HEART HEALTHY WAYS TO ADD FLAVOUR

It's important to enjoy your foods and find ways to add flavour to heart healthy options. In addition to fat, salt and sugar are two items frequently used for flavouring food. Cooking at home allows you to control or moderate the amount you use compared to eating out or buying pre-packaged foods or condiments.

Below are some ideas for adding in heart healthy flavours to your foods:

- Experiment with different types of vinegar – they add flavour to vegetables, tenderize meat, and make tasty sauces
- Use salt-free or reduced salt stock for added flavour to items like whole grains and sautéed vegetables
- Sweeten yogurt, oatmeal, or homemade baking with mashed or dried fruit
- Mix a variety of vegetables for added texture and flavour in dishes
- Kick up the spice with cayenne pepper, hot peppers, or hot sauce
- Create your own no salt added spice and herb blends such as homemade taco seasoning

REDUCE HIGHLY PROCESSED FOODS

There is no formal definition of processed foods. Many types of healthy foods are “processed”, such as canned tomatoes, bread, or yogurt. These are not the foods we wish to reduce but rather the highly processed foods that provide limited nutritional value or contain excess sodium, saturated fat or salt (e.g. commercial baking products like cookies and pastries, processed meats, pre-packaged meals, candies, and sugar-sweetened beverages).

Processed foods are most often used for convenience or pleasure and avoiding them completely isn't necessary. But eating them too often or in larger quantities can have a negative impact on your heart health and increase your risk for other chronic diseases. Choose smaller portions or finding healthier substitutions for highly processed foods.

CHOOSING LESS PROCESSED FOODS

There are no foods that you can *never* have when eating heart healthy. In fact, restricting food items entirely may make them more appealing and make sticking to dietary changes long-term less likely. Use the motto “cut back, not cut out.” Here are a few ways you can put that motto into practice:

- **Reduce portion size** – Eating mindfully will help you enjoy foods more fully, making it easier to reduce portion sizes and total amounts of highly processed foods you eat.
- **Limit frequency** – Consider how often you currently choose processed foods and try to slowly reduce the number of times in a week that you choose those foods.
- **Make substitutions** – Note where you most often use processed foods and make healthy swaps to items over time.
- **Cook more often** – When cooking at home, you have more control over ingredients used. Batch cooking and storing leftovers in the freezer makes unprocessed, homemade options convenient for later use.

Easy Swaps for Processed Foods

MEALS + SIDE DISHES	Deli and processed meats (e.g. bacon, sausage)	➔	Bake a whole chicken, turkey breast or pork tenderloin and freeze individual portions for use in sandwiches, salads or stir-fries. Deli rotisserie chicken can also be used though they are higher in sodium.
	Frozen seasoned or battered meat or fish	➔	Buy fresh meat/seafood and add homemade marinade to individual freezer bags/containers – the meat will marinate and season as it thaws.
	Frozen pizza	➔	Use whole grain pita bread to make homemade pizza where you can load up on vegetables and reduce processed meats and/or cheese.
	Seasoned/packaged rice or pasta (e.g. flavoured rice, Kraft Dinner, Sidekicks®, Instant Noodles)	➔	Batch cook pasta sauce and seasoned brown rice (or other whole grains like barley or quinoa) to freeze.
BREAKFAST	Sugar sweetened cereal	➔	Mix half-and-half with a no sugar, high fibre cereal.
	Instant sweetened oatmeal	➔	Cook a large batch of rolled oats at the start of the week, keep in a container in the fridge and microwave for a quick breakfast. Sweeten with dried or pureed fruit.
SNACKS + DRINKS	Store-bought muffins, cookies or pastries	➔	Batch cook homemade muffins and cookies and freeze.
	Chips	➔	Air-pop popcorn and store in individual containers for a quick whole grain snack.
	Sugar-sweetened beverages (e.g. pop, iced tea, Slurpees®, energy/ sports drinks)	➔	Choose sparkling flavoured water or fruit-infused water, make your own fruit slushy or cold-brewed tea at home.

EATING OUT

About 54% of Canadians eat out one or more times per week. It can be challenging to eat heart healthy when eating out because:

- Restaurants have larger portions than would typically be served at home;
- Meals often do not fit the balanced plate; and,
- You have less control over how foods are prepared and seasoned.

While eating out is an important part of our culture, often we eat out because of convenience, lack of time to cook, or lack of ability/desire to cook. By meal planning, scheduling, and improving our cooking skills we can cut back on the amount we eat out while still maintaining the cultural importance of eating out with friends and family.

For the next month try this activity:

Write down every time you eat out

This includes convenience stores, coffee stops, fast food, restaurants and ordering in

Are you surprised by the amount at the end of the month?



Write down the reason you ate out

Was it a social event or out of convenience (e.g. didn't plan dinner, running errands and got hungry, didn't feel like cooking)

Count the total number of times you ate out for a social event versus out of convenience.



Choose one reason you ate out of convenience and think of a solution that you can work on for the next month

(e.g. meal plan, pack snacks when running errands, take a cooking class, etc.)

Work on making one change at a time. Once that change becomes habit, work on another.

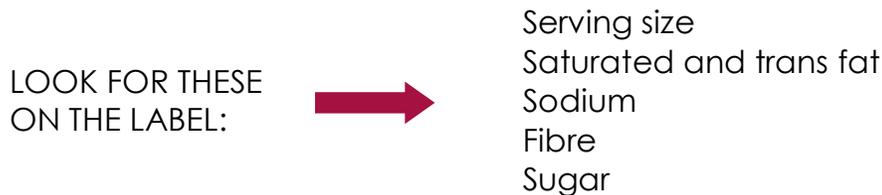
There are other ways we can choose to make healthier choices when we are eating out, such as:

- Ask for extra vegetables in place of half of the rice, noodles, bread, or potato.
- Ask how the food is prepared and request substitutions (e.g. grilled chicken for crispy chicken or brown rice for white rice) and sauces on the side if necessary.

- Try to avoid becoming too hungry before heading to a restaurant as this can affect the food choices we make and the speed at which we eat causing us to be uncomfortably full.
- Take time to enjoy the taste and texture of the food, the restaurant atmosphere, the company you are with, and the conversation you are having.
- Slow down the pace of eating by putting your cutlery down between bites and sipping water often.
- Stop eating when you are full and ask the server to remove your plate when you have had enough. You can ask to take the leftovers home.

LABEL READING

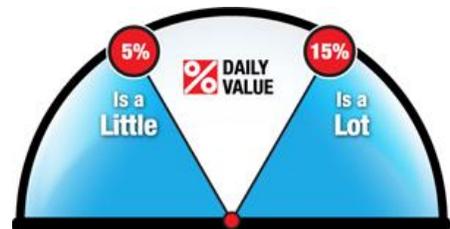
Nutrition labels on food products might seem complicated but, with a little know-how, they can guide healthy food choices. The five items on the *Nutrition Facts* table that are most helpful for assessing if a food is heart-healthy or not are:



The following steps will help you make sense of the information listed on the table:

STEP 1: Look at the serving size to determine the amount of food being referred to on the label

STEP 2: The % Daily Value (DV) will tell you if there is **a little** (5% or less) or **a lot** (15% or more) of a nutrient in the serving of food.



STEP 3: Use the % Daily Value to compare and choose healthier foods:

- Choose mostly foods with a **low** % Daily Value (5% or less) for saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and sugar
- Look for foods with a **high** % Daily Value (15% or more) of fibre

STEP 4:

If the label doesn't list a % Daily Value for sugar, determine if the sugar is "free (added) sugar" or naturally present in the whole food.

- Free sugars include sugars added to food as well as sugars in honey, syrups, and fruit juices.
- Naturally present sugars found in whole foods like fruit, milk products, vegetables, and grains are not a concern.

If you're not sure whether a food contains free sugars, check the ingredient list, looking for sugar, words that end in '-ose', honey, or fruit juice concentrate.

It may help to understand that a teaspoon of sugar, honey, or syrup contains about 4 grams of sugar. For example, if a food contains 24 grams of free sugar that would be equal to 6 teaspoons (24 grams ÷ 4 = 6 teaspoons of free sugar)

Guidelines recommend not exceeding 25-50 grams/day of free sugar (6-12 tsp)

Now that you have the basics down, it's time to test your label reading skills. Look at the *Nutrition Facts* table for cereal shown below:

Nutrition Facts			
Per 1/2 cup (28 g)			
Amount	% Daily Value		
Calories 120			
Fat 1 g	2 %		
Saturated 0.2 g + Trans 0 g	1 %		
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 190 mg	8 %		
Carbohydrate 23 g	8 %		
Fibre 7 g	28 %		
Sugars 5 g			
Protein 3 g			
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C	0 %	
Calcium 2 %	Iron	30 %	

Food Label News

Health Canada has made updates to Canadian food labels. Manufacturers have until December 2021 to use new food labels.

You may start to see some labels that look slightly different from the above picture, however, the same principles on how to read the label will apply.

Test Your Label Reading Skills:

1. What is the serving size? _____
2. What is the % DV for saturated and trans-fat? _____ Low DV High DV
3. Would a 1 cup portion be low or high in sodium? Low High
4. What is the % DV for fibre? _____ Low DV High DV
5. What sugar is most likely in this cereal? Naturally occurring Free sugar
6. How many teaspoons of sugar are in 1 cup of this cereal? _____

Answers: ½ cup; 1%, low; high; 28%, high; free sugar; 2.5 tsp.

EAT MINDFULLY AND FIND SATISFACTION IN FOOD

After a heart event, fear may motivate you to make dietary changes. The good news is that the fear will likely fade. The bad news is that your motivation for healthier eating may also fade, especially if you're choosing foods that you don't find satisfying.

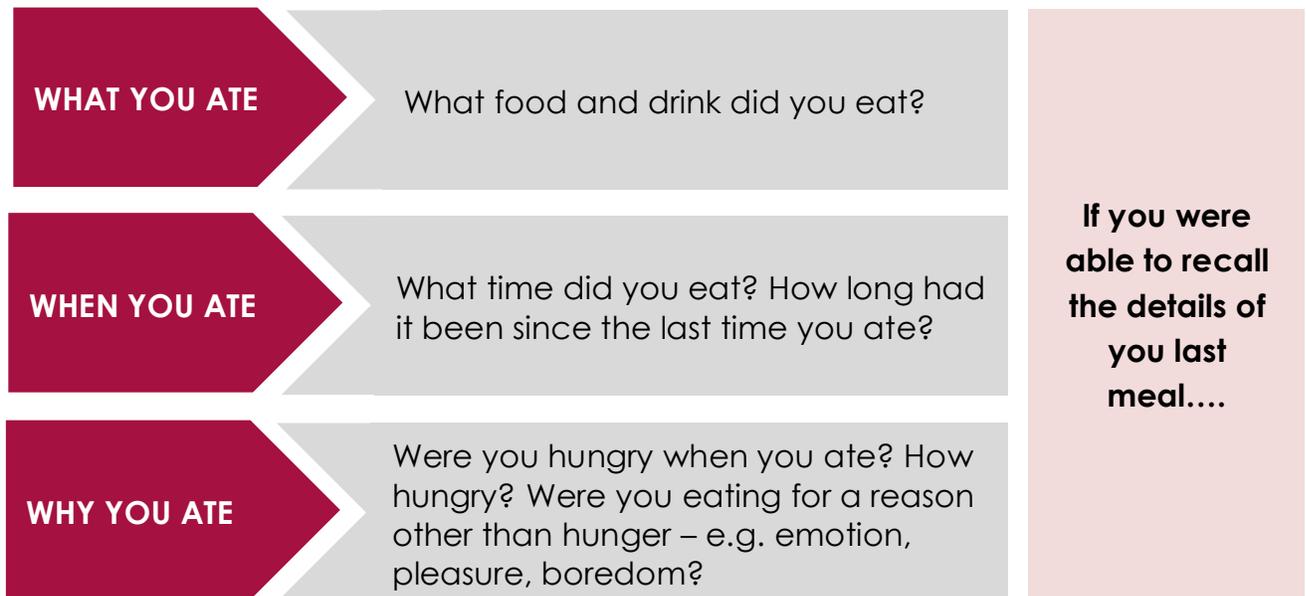
You can make longer-lasting changes by taking time to eat mindfully, sharing meals with others, and experimenting until you find heart-healthier foods you enjoy and that help you feel better.

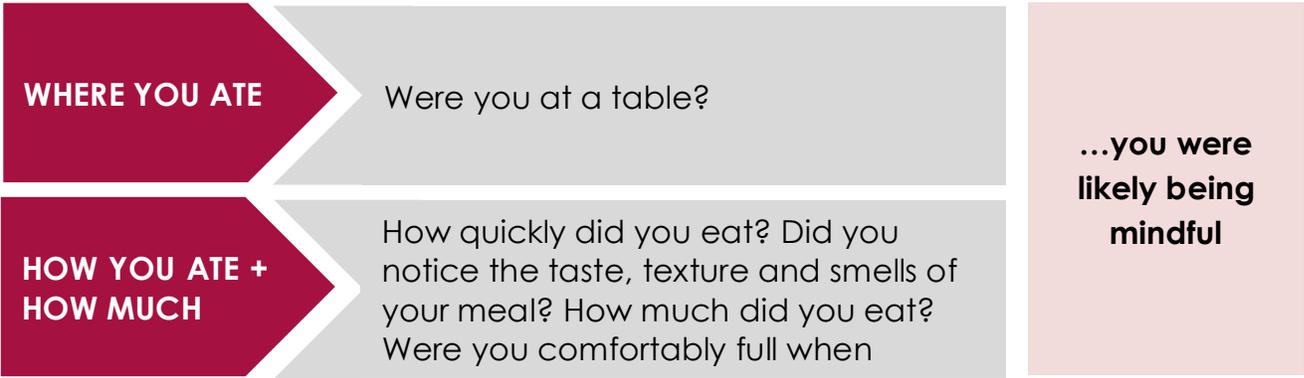
MINDFUL EATING

Eating mindfully means being aware of how, why, and what you are eating. There are many benefits to focusing on the food and the way your body feels including:

- Appreciating and enjoying food more and, on the other hand, recognizing when food isn't very tasty or satisfying, allowing you the opportunity to decide if you wish to continue eating or not.
- Understanding your body's cues. When you recognize your body's signs of hunger, fullness, satisfaction, and discomfort you can make food choices that make your body feel good.
- Bringing awareness and adjustments to the way you eat and food habits.

Ask yourself the following questions about your last meal to see if you are eating mindfully?





Mindful eating is more than just eating without distractions. While removing the TV, your phone, or work is a good first step to mindful eating, the practice also involves being present with the taste, texture, smell of the food and the way your body and mind are feeling, in a non-judgmental way.

MINDFUL EATING SKILLS TO PRACTICE

Take a deep breath and check in with your body before beginning a meal.
Assess how you're feeling and take time to assess your hunger.
(refer to scale in next section)

↓

Remove distractions and screens from your eating area.

↓

Take notice of the way your food looks and smells.
Allow yourself to experience the taste and textures.

↓

Set your cutlery down between the bites and slow down chewing.

↓

Notice how you feel about the food – is it enjoyable? Do you find it satisfying?
Does the taste become more or less appealing as you eat more?

↓

Notice how your body sensations change as you eat – can you feel the subtle approach to fullness?

Eating mindfully is a skill. At first, it will take conscious effort but over time the skill will come more naturally. It's also important to remember that no one eats mindfully 100% of the time. Have compassion with yourself if you must eat quickly in the car

on the way to an appointment. The goal is simply to eat mindfully more often and to notice how it impacts your food choices and the way you feel when you do.

ASSESSING YOUR HUNGER AND FULLNESS

Reading this chapter, you may have noticed that we don't talk a lot about how much food to eat or how often. That's because the best guide of that is your internal body cues rather than external rules or guidelines. One person may need a different amount of food than the next and different amounts on different days.

Our body has internal regulation systems to tell us when and how much to eat. That's why it feels uncomfortable to be overly hungry or overly full. The hunger scale is a tool to help you get in touch with your internal regulation systems which can be used to determine when is the right time to eat and how much to eat for your body on any given day.

HUNGER SCALE	
1	Ravenous
2	Uncomfortably hungry
3	Regular Hungry
4	A Little Hungry
5	Neutral
6	Neutral
7	Lightly Full
8	Comfortably Full
9	Uncomfortably Full
10	Painfully full

Everyone's body cues on the hunger scale will feel a little different. Take some time to think about what different levels on the scale feel like in your body.

Many people have ignored their hunger and fullness cues for years and struggle to feel the more subtle signs of hunger and fullness and instead only feel the extreme ends. If that sounds like you, don't worry! With practice, most people can get back in touch with their body cues.

Practice using the hunger scale. For one week try the following exercise:

1. Before every meal or snack, assess where you fall on the scale. Write down the body sensations you are feeling.
2. Write down what you ate and how much. This isn't meant to track calories but instead to learn about your food choices – what foods keep you feeling fuller longer? How much food does it take to feel comfortably full?
3. After your meal or snack, assess where you fall on the scale. Write down the body sensations you are feeling.

4. If you find yourself on either extreme end of the scale (1-2 or 9-10), take time to ask yourself what led you there. The idea is to be curious rather than judgemental about your eating habits.
- Did you skip a meal?
 - Were you busy and didn't notice your earlier hunger cues?
 - Were you eating quickly and didn't recognize fullness?
 - Was the food so tasty that you chose to eat past fullness?
 - Were you stressed and eating for comfort rather than hunger?

The goal of this exercise is to learn to be more in tune with your body's more subtle cues of hunger and fullness and to learn from your own patterns. It's normal to fall at extreme ends of the scale at times but, if it happens frequently, you can find ways to better regulate your eating patterns.

For example, you may notice you often miss lunch because you're busy and don't recognize your early hunger signals. This leads to being ravenous in the afternoon, making less healthy food decisions and eating quickly. To solve this, you can set a timer around noon where you take a moment to check in with your hunger and see if you should stop and eat sooner rather than later.

We don't always eat for hunger. Sometimes we eat for taste, comfort, celebration, and so on and that is okay. The hunger scale is a guide to help you fuel your body and feel comfortable but it's not a rule that must always be followed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SATISFACTION

Many people think a heart healthy diet means cutting out all the foods that you enjoy and placing foods into *should* or *shouldn't* eat categories. But denying yourself certain foods you like will only serve to make you want them more.

When we eat foods that are not satisfying to us, we are more likely to overeat, whereas when we are experiencing pleasure from food, it is easier to stop when we feel comfortably full. If our diet is lacking satisfaction and enjoyment, it's unlikely to last very long. Instead, allow yourself foods that you enjoy and focus on adding in heart healthy foods to shift your dietary patterns over time.

But won't I just eat cake all the time?

Many people worry if they allow themselves to eat food they enjoy they will want to eat cake, chips, cookies, etc. all the time. But when you focus on how food makes you feel you might notice that you get an upset stomach or bloating, don't feel full for very long, become cranky between meals, or that you enjoy eating a variety of foods.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is alcohol good for heart health?

While there may be some benefit to heart health from drinking wine, beer, or spirits in moderation, there are several health problems linked with excess consumption.

How much is too much? Men should aim for no more than 2-3 drinks per day, with a maximum of 15 per week. Women should aim for no more than 1-2 drinks per day, with a maximum of 10 per week. A drink is considered 12 ounces of beer, 1.5 ounces of spirits, or 5 ounces of wine.

Saving your weekly drinks for the weekend brings its own host of problems, such as increased incidence of heart attack, stroke, and cancer.

Is it okay to have caffeine?

It's fine to have up to 300 mg a day of caffeine – about the amount in 2 cups (8 ounces or 250 mL) of coffee. However, even small amounts of caffeine may interfere with sleep for some people, and good sleep is important for heart health. Remember to avoid caffeine three hours before and one hour after exercise, including an exercise stress test.

I've heard that supplements, such as fish oil, are good for heart health. Is it true?

While some supplements such as fish oil may be of benefit to some people – for example, those who have abnormally high levels of fats in their blood (high triglycerides) – it is recommended that all supplements be discussed with your doctor as they may interact with your medications. High doses can cause harmful side effects.

We also know that no supplements can fully replicate food and that the best way to get your nutrients is by eating whole foods.

Should I avoid fish because of the mercury in it?

For adults with heart concerns, the health benefits of fish outweigh the risk of consuming too much mercury. To limit your intake of mercury and other potential contaminants you can vary the fish you eat, limit your intake of high mercury fish (e.g. fresh/frozen albacore tuna, shark and swordfish), and eat no more than 4-5 servings of fish a week.

Is sea salt better than table salt?

Sea salt is often marketed as healthier than table salt because of its mineral content but the amount of salt you would need to consume to get any noticeable amount of minerals would negate the benefits. Both types of salt have the same amount of sodium. However, taste and texture may differ. You may prefer the use of one over the other, but both should be used in moderation.

What about coconut oil?

Coconut oil is promoted as a “health food” for everything from weight loss to Alzheimer’s disease. Unfortunately, there is little research to back up these claims. We do know that coconut oil raises blood cholesterol levels, so it’s recommended to choose unsaturated liquid oils instead.

Should I choose butter or margarine?

Butter is primarily made up of saturated fat which raises our LDL cholesterol whereas margarine is made up of unsaturated fat which helps lower our LDL cholesterol. In the past, hard stick margarine contained trans fats which are particularly bad for heart health, but they have since been banned from our food supply. Non-hydrogenated margarine is the heart healthier choice (however, in small amounts, it isn’t likely to make much difference one way or the other). When possible, use a natural healthy fat like olive oil or peanut butter instead.

Why do I find conflicting nutrition information online?

Nutrition science is complicated because we don’t eat foods in isolation and how or what we eat is affected by other factors including stress and sleep (which are also risk factors for many chronic diseases). As more research is done, our understanding of nutrition evolves and small shifts in recommendations and guidelines occur.

What causes confusion is that many online sources sensationalize or misinterpret nutrition information to create headlines or sell products. When reading nutrition information, take time to ask yourself these questions:

- Is it written by a nutrition expert (i.e. a registered dietitian)?
- Are they trying to sell a product, increase readership, etc.?
- Is the article discussing a single study or considering the entire body of evidence?

Go to organizations such as Dietitians of Canada, Heart and Stroke Foundation or the American Heart Association for trusted advice.

I've heard eggs are high in cholesterol, should I be avoiding them?

For a long time, guidelines suggested strictly limiting eggs in the diet due to their high cholesterol content. However, we now know that, for most people, dietary cholesterol has a limited impact on blood cholesterol levels. While some studies suggest that people who eat a lot of eggs experience more heart problems, particularly if they have diabetes, the evidence is not conclusive.

Eggs are a nutritious, convenient, and affordable protein source that can be chosen as one of your protein options.

Do I need a protein powder to meet my protein needs?

Many people worry if they reduce their meat portion to 3 ounces or choose more plant-based protein options they won't meet their daily protein requirements. By filling $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with protein foods and choosing a variety of protein options at each meal and snack, most people can meet their protein needs through food alone.

Protein powders can be a convenient option but whole foods will always give you more vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. If you buy protein powder, be sure to check the product's sugar content. Other portable protein options include trail mix and whole grain crackers with hummus or peanut butter.

I want to lose weight; how much should I aim for and how should I change my diet?

A common goal coming into cardiac rehab is weight loss. However, while diets for weight loss work in the short term, research shows that most people regain the weight lost within 2-5 years. Stalled weight loss or weight regain is discouraging and often causes a return to previous dietary habits. Shifting the focus from weight loss to health behaviour change allows you to develop long-lasting, health-boosting behaviours.

Focus on changing dietary and lifestyle habits one at a time – allowing each change to become habit before moving onto the next. This will help provide lasting benefits to your health and ultimately be better for helping you to feel better and live longer. If you're struggling to make sense of weight loss versus behaviour change, speak with one of your health coaches, family doctor, or a dietitian.

Should I consider a diet plan like ketogenic diet or intermittent fasting?

Any diet plan that restricts categories of food or times in which you can eat may result in short-term weight loss. However, weight regain is likely and these diets may impair your ability to eat mindfully, find satisfaction in food, and regulate your hunger/fullness.

The ketogenic diet restricts entire categories of foods including fruit, whole grains, and legumes which have been proven to help prevent and protect against heart disease. Instead of focusing on what to cut out of your diet, focus on what you can add in!

How can I prevent weight gain when I quit smoking?

After quitting smoking many people experience an increased appetite and, as a result, weight gain. Research shows that the benefit obtained from quitting smoking outweighs any risk you might add by gaining some weight.

Should I choose sugar substitutes over sugar?

Choosing sugar substitutes such as aspartame, sucralose, and Stevia can help to reduce sugar in the diet. However, all sweeteners, including natural ones like Stevia, are highly processed and primarily found in highly processed food products such as pop, candy, and cookies. The best approach would be to limit highly processed foods and reduce both sugar and sugar substitutes in the diet.

ONLINE RESOURCES HEALTH EATING AND NUTRITION INFORMATION

- Canada's Food Guide: www.food-guide.canada.ca
- Unlock Food: www.unlockfood.ca

HEALTHY EATING COOKBOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- Heart and Stroke Foundation: www.heartandstroke.ca
- Stern, B, *HeartSmart: The Best of HeartSmart Cooking*. Random House Canada, 2006.
- Waisman, M, *Dietitians of Canada: Cook!* Robert Rose, 2011.
- Strachan, C, *30-Minute Heart Healthy Cookbook*. Rockridge Press, 2019.
- Cronish, N & Rosenbloom, C, *Nourish: Whole Food Recipes Featuring Seeds, Nuts & Beans*. Whitecap Books, 2016
- Preparation, Storage and Recipes for Pulses: www.albertapulse.ca

DIABETES COOKBOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- Canadian Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.ca
- Graham, K. *Canada's Diabetes Meals for Good Health*. Robert Rose, 2012.
- American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association, *Diabetes & Heart Healthy Cookbook*. American Diabetes Association, 2014.

NUTRITION LABELLING RESOURCES

- Health Canada: www.healthcanada.gc.ca – see food labelling information under Food and Nutrition section.
- Unlock Food: www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Nutrition-labelling

SODIUM AND BLOOD PRESSURE COOKBOOKS AND RESOURCES

- American Heart Association. *American Heart Association Low-Salt Cookbook 4th Edition: A Complete Guide to Reducing Sodium and Fat in Your Diet*. Harmony, 2013.
- Lindsay, A. *Lighthearted at Home: The Very Best of Anne Lindsay*. Wiley, 2010.
- Dash Diet: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan>
- Maureen Tilley, *Hold That Hidden Salt: Recipes for delicious alternatives to processed, salt-heavy supermarket favourites*. Formac, 2011.

MEAL PLANNING RESOURCES

- Heart and Stroke Foundation Meal Planning Toolkit: www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/healthy-meal-planning-toolkit
- Cookspiration Menu Planner: www.cookspiration.com/menuplanner.aspx