

Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes to Lower Cholesterol

To promote heart health, you should:

- ♥ Adopt healthy eating habits that include foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and cholesterol.
- ♥ Lose weight if you are overweight or obese.
- ♥ Increase physical activity. Talk to your healthcare provider to make an appropriate plan for you. Try for 30-60 minutes of exercise each day.
- ♥ Cut out smoking/tobacco products. If it is hard to quit on your own, ask for help. All VA Medical Centers have programs to help veterans quit smoking.

| Food Group | Best Choices |
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| <p>Grains</p> <p>Choose at least 6 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 slice bread - 1-ounce dry cereal - ½ cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ 100% whole grain breads, rolls, buns, bagels, pita breads and English muffins. ♥ Whole grain soft tortillas, rice cakes, breadsticks ♥ Steel cut oatmeal, dry whole oat cereals ♥ Brown rice and whole grain pasta <p>Tip: Choose more whole grain foods. The words “whole” or “bran” should be listed first on the ingredient label. Look for 100% whole grain.</p> |
| <p>Vegetables</p> <p>Choose 3 to 5 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 cup raw leafy vegetables - ½ cup cooked or chopped raw vegetables - ¾ cup vegetable juice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Fresh, frozen and low-sodium canned vegetables ♥ Vegetables steamed or sautéed in canola or olive oil, low-sodium vegetable juice and low-sodium vegetable or clear broth soups |

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| <p>Fruits</p> <p>Choose 2 to 4 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 piece fresh fruit - 1/2 cup canned fruit - 1/4 cup dried fruit - 3/4 cup fruit juice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Fresh or frozen fruit, dried fruit without added sugar and canned fruit in natural juice ♥ Choose whole fruit instead of juice to get more fiber ♥ Fruit is a good choice for a snack or dessert |
| <p>Dairy Products</p> <p>Choose 2 to 3 low-fat or fat-free servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 cup milk - 1 cup yogurt - 1 1/2 -2 ounces cheese | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Fat-free and 1% milk ♥ Yogurt, cheese or buttermilk made with skim or 1% milk, cheese made with 3 grams of fat per ounce ♥ Fat-free cream cheese and sour cream ♥ Unsweetened soymilk, rice milk or almond milk |
| <p>Meat and Meat Substitutes</p> <p>Limit meat to no more than 5 ounces each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3-ounce meat, fish, poultry - 1/2 cup beans, peas, lentils - 2 egg whites - <p>A 3-ounce portion of cooked meat is about the size of a deck of cards.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Ground beef >90% lean, round and loin cuts of beef ♥ Skinless white meat chicken and turkey (not deep-fried) ♥ Canadian bacon ♥ Salmon, tuna (in water), sardines, mackerel and herring ♥ Imitation “meat” made from soy, egg whites or egg substitutes ♥ Veal, loin and leg cuts of pork and lamb, wild game like venison and elk |
| <p>Fats, Oils and Sweets</p> <p>Choose margarines with liquid vegetable oil listed before hydrogenated oil on the ingredient list.</p> <p>Limit intake of sweets and snacks, especially if you are overweight. A dessert labeled fat-free can still have calories</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Canola, olive or flaxseed oil ♥ Vegetable cooking sprays ♥ Margarines that help lower cholesterol ♥ Nuts, seeds, avocados, olives, and natural peanut butter ♥ Low-fat gravy (powder mixes or jars) ♥ Sugar-free gelatin, fat-free/sugar-free pudding |