

# Protect Your Heart: Choose Fats Wisely

## Toolkit No. 7

### Why should I choose fats wisely?

Diabetes increases your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke. But you can protect your heart and blood vessels by choosing fats wisely. Some kinds of fat, such as butter and shortening, can increase your cholesterol and your chances of heart disease. Other kinds, such as olive oil and canola oil, protect your heart by lowering your cholesterol levels.

All fats are high in calories. If you're trying to lose weight, you'll still want to limit the amount of fat you eat. The types and amounts of fat appear in the Nutrition Facts area of food labels.

### How can I choose fats wisely?

Try these steps to protect your heart and blood vessels:

- Eat less total fat, especially less saturated fat and *trans* fat.
- Cut back on foods that are high in cholesterol.
- Choose the kinds of fat that can help lower your cholesterol levels.

### Fats that increase your chances of heart disease and stroke

Saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol increase your blood cholesterol and can cause a buildup of materials that can clog your blood vessels. The blood supply to your heart can be blocked, leading to a heart attack. A blockage in the blood vessels going to your brain can result in a stroke.



Eating low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol foods can protect your heart and blood vessels.

### Saturated fat

Saturated fat can raise your cholesterol level.

#### Sources of saturated fat

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bacon and bacon grease</li> <li>• butter</li> <li>• chocolate</li> <li>• coconut and coconut oil</li> <li>• cream sauce</li> <li>• high-fat dairy products, such as cheese, cream, ice cream, whole milk, 2% milk, and sour cream</li> <li>• fatback and salt pork</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gravy made with meat drippings</li> <li>• lard and shortening</li> <li>• high-fat meats like regular ground beef, bologna, hot dogs, sausage, and spareribs</li> <li>• palm oil and palm kernel oil</li> <li>• poultry skin</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

### *Trans*-unsaturated fatty acids (*trans* fats)

*Trans* fats can also raise your cholesterol level.

#### Sources of *trans* fat

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• processed foods like snacks and baked goods with hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil</li> <li>• stick margarines</li> <li>• shortening</li> <li>• some fast food items such as french fries</li> </ul> |
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## Cholesterol

Your body makes some of the cholesterol in your blood. The rest comes from the foods you eat. Foods from animals are the main sources of dietary cholesterol.

### Sources of cholesterol

- high-fat dairy products
- egg yolks
- liver and other organ meats
- high-fat meat and poultry

## Fats that can protect your heart

Monounsaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, and special cholesterol-lowering margarines can actually protect your heart by lowering your blood cholesterol. That's why it's better to use them instead of saturated fat. Another kind of protective fat, called omega-3 fatty acids, is found in some types of fish.

### Monounsaturated fat

Monounsaturated fat, one type of unsaturated fat, can lower your blood cholesterol.

### Sources of monounsaturated fat

- avocado
- canola oil
- nuts like almonds, cashews, pecans, and peanuts
- olive oil and olives
- peanut butter and peanut oil
- sesame seeds

### Polyunsaturated fat

Polyunsaturated fat, another type of unsaturated fat, protects your heart.

### Sources of polyunsaturated fat

- |                  |                              |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| • corn oil       | • walnuts                    |
| • cottonseed oil | • pumpkin or sunflower seeds |
| • safflower oil  | • soft (tub) margarine       |
| • soybean oil    | • mayonnaise                 |
| • sunflower oil  | • salad dressings            |

## Omega-3 fatty acids

This type of fat helps prevent clogging of the arteries. Some types of fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Eat fish, prepared a low-fat way, 2 or 3 times a week. Choose broiling, baking, grilling, or steaming. You can also buy tuna packed in water and make tuna fish salad with low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise.

### Sources of omega-3 fatty acids

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| • albacore tuna | • rainbow trout |
| • herring       | • sardines      |
| • mackerel      | • salmon        |

## Special cholesterol-lowering margarine

Having 2 to 3 tablespoons of a cholesterol-lowering margarine every day can lower your cholesterol. These margarines contain plant stanols or plant sterols, ingredients that keep cholesterol from being absorbed. You'll find several types at the grocery store in the margarine section.

For more help, ask your health care team for copies of these brochures:

- Toolkit No. 6: *Protect Your Heart: Make Wise Food Choices*
- Toolkit No. 8: *Protect Your Heart: Cook with Heart-Healthy Foods*
- Toolkit No. 9: *Protect Your Heart: Check Food Labels to Make Heart-Healthy Choices*

