



UNDERSTANDING

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A
guide
to making
informed
food choices

Your Best Bet For Good Health

Nutritious food choices and regular physical activity top the list of things you can do for your good health. Even small changes in your eating and activity habits can make a big difference.



Making wise food choices

Eating a healthy variety of nutritious foods will give you the energy and nutrients your body needs. Fat, protein and carbohydrate are all essential nutrients. This booklet is designed to help you better understand fats so that you can make wise food choices for you and your family.

Everybody needs some fat

Fats are an important source of energy. They also provide the essential omega-3 and omega-6 fats which contribute to normal growth and metabolism. Your body needs fat to absorb fat-soluble vitamins.

A Healthy Balance

Eating too much or too little fat, protein or carbohydrate can lead to health problems. Experts recommend a range of healthy intakes to meet your nutrient needs and lower your risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer. Both the total amount of fat and types of fat you eat are important.

Did you know?

Fat should account for 20 to 35% of your daily energy (calorie) intake.

Sources: The National Academy of Sciences. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fibre, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein and Amino Acids*, 2002.

How much fat should you aim for?

	AVERAGE SUGGESTED DAILY FAT INTAKE		
	CALORIES/DAY	GRAMS OF FAT/DAY	FAT/DAY
Women, 19-74 yrs.	1800-2000	40 to 75 grams	8 to 15 tsp (40 to 75 mL)
Men, 19-74 yrs.	2300-3000	50 to 115 grams	10 to 23 tsp (50 to 115 mL)

The chart above shows approximately how much fat this translates to based on average calorie needs. Keep in mind that your own needs may differ.

Did you know?

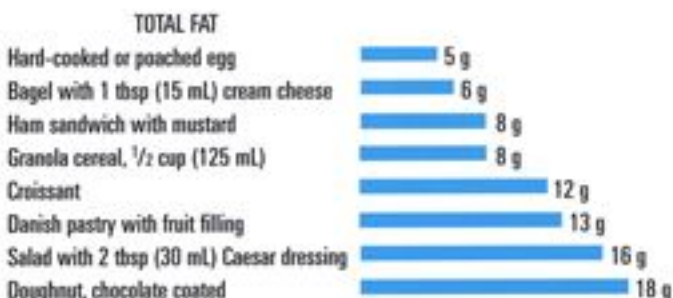
Most Canadians eat healthy amounts of fat, protein and carbohydrate.

However, many could benefit by eating less saturated and *trans* fats.

Sources: Ontario Food Survey, 2002 and British Columbia Nutrition Survey, 2004.

Have a look at the chart below and the Nutrition Facts on food labels to see how various foods fit into a healthy fat intake. Some higher fat choices can quickly use up your daily "fat allowance". Remember, portion size matters – larger portion sizes have even more fat.

Compare the fat content



Source: Health Canada. *Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods*, 1999.

Different Types of Fat

There are different types of fat – unsaturated (including polyunsaturated and monounsaturated), saturated and *trans* fats.

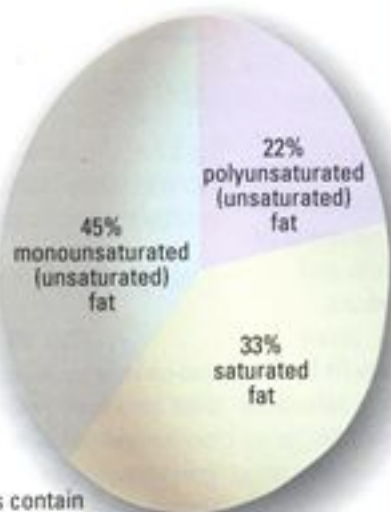
Different types of fat affect your health in different ways.

- Some types of fat raise LDL (bad) blood cholesterol levels. High LDL blood cholesterol levels are a factor for heart disease.
- Other types of fat lower or have no effect on LDL blood cholesterol levels.

Did you know? Research shows it is the fat in food, particularly the saturated and *trans* fat, and not the cholesterol in food that raises blood cholesterol the most.

Source: McDonald BE.
National Institute of
Nutrition Review
No. 30, 2000.

Most foods that contain fat have a mixture of different types of fat. For example, one large egg contains:



- Note: Eggs contain no (0%) *trans* fat.

Tossed Spinach Salad

Number of servings	6
Preparation time	10 minutes
Cooking time	2½ minutes


2	eggs	2
½ cup	sugar	125 mL
¼ cup	water	50 mL
¼ cup	vinegar	50 mL
¼ tsp	dry mustard	1 mL
	Freshly ground pepper, to taste	
2 pkgs	(6 oz/171 g each) fresh tender spinach leaves, torn into bite-size pieces*	2
1 pkg	(8 oz/227 g) fresh mushrooms, sliced	1
3	celery stalks, sliced	3
2	medium tomatoes, cut into wedges	2
1	cucumber, sliced	1
1 lb	boneless, skinless chicken breast, grilled and sliced	450 g
8	hard-cooked eggs, cut into wedges	8

Beat eggs with sugar and water in a microwave-safe medium bowl. Microwave** on high (100%) for 1 minute. Stir in vinegar, dry mustard and pepper; microwave on high (100%) for 1½ to 2 minutes, whisking halfway through cooking. Set aside.

Toss spinach with mushrooms, celery, tomatoes and cucumber. Divide among six dinner plates. Top with chicken slices and egg wedges. Drizzle with warm dressing.

* Spinach leaves can be wilted and drained.

** Recipe tested in a 650-watt microwave oven.



Calories: 311
Protein: 31.1 g
Carbohydrate: 25.3 g
Fat: 9.9 g

Focus on Fats

Unsaturated fats include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These unsaturated fats may help improve blood cholesterol levels.

Saturated fats tend to raise blood cholesterol levels.

Trans fats tend to raise blood cholesterol levels even more than saturated fats.

Health experts recommend more of your daily fat intake come from unsaturated fats than saturated and *trans* fats. Your total fat intake is important also. Cutting back on foods high in saturated and *trans* fats can help you lower your total fat intake.

Did you know?

Omega-3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fat that benefits heart health. You can increase your omega-3 fat intake by making fish, flaxseed, and omega-3 enhanced eggs and milk products part of your regular diet.

To increase your unsaturated fat intake

Enjoy foods such as:

- nuts and seeds (e.g. peanuts, walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, flaxseed)
- avocados and olives
- oils (e.g. sunflower, safflower, soybean, corn, canola, olive, peanut oils)
- soft non-hydrogenated margarines made with the oils listed above
- eggs, fish, lean meats and poultry without the skin
- lower-fat milk and milk products (e.g. yogurt, cheese)

To lower your saturated and *trans* fat intake

Limit foods such as:

- processed foods made with lard, palm and coconut oils
- baked goods made with shortening, butter and partially hydrogenated oils (e.g. croissants, cakes, pastries)
- packaged snack foods (e.g. cookies, crackers, potato chips, corn chips)
- deep-fried foods (e.g. French fries)
- margarines made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils
- butter, cream and whipped toppings

Understanding Cholesterol

Healthy blood cholesterol levels lower your risk of heart disease. Cholesterol is made naturally by all animals and humans. Your body needs cholesterol to make hormones and vitamin D and to keep cells healthy.

Your liver makes most of the cholesterol your body needs. Dietary cholesterol found in foods such as meat, poultry, shellfish, eggs and milk products has little effect on blood cholesterol for most people.

If you are concerned about your blood cholesterol levels, the three most important steps you can take are:

1. Aim for a healthy body weight.
2. Be physically active every day.
3. Follow a healthy eating pattern low in saturated and *trans* fats.

Want more information?

The Unscrambling Cholesterol fact sheet at www.canadaegg.ca explains how lifestyle and food choices can help you control your blood cholesterol levels.



A Guide to Healthy Eating

Watching the amount and types of fat you eat is just one part of healthy eating. Use *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to guide you in making wise food choices to create an overall healthy eating pattern.

Healthy eating patterns include a variety of nutritious foods from each food group. Here are some tips for managing your fat intake as part of an overall healthy eating plan.

Those "Little" Extras Add Up!

On average, Canadians get about 25% of their energy (calories) from foods that are high in fat and/or sugar such as butter, margarine, mayonnaise, shortening, oils, high-fat snack foods, sweets and sweetened beverages. The "little" extras you add to food can be a major source of fat and calories.

Did you know?

It's easy to get a copy of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. Contact your local health department or visit www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide.

Try these ideas to add flavour without fat:

- Season vegetables and meat and alternatives with herbs, spices, citrus juices and vinegars.
- Use dried soup mixes or herbs and spices to flavour rice, couscous and other grains.
- Top pasta with tomato and vegetable based sauces.
- Use a non-stick skillet with a little cooking spray, water or broth when stir frying.
- Dress sandwiches and wraps with vegetables, salsa, mustard, chutney or relishes.

Curly Noodle Frittata

Number of servings	4
Preparation time	5 minutes
Cooking time	7 minutes
Standing time	3 minutes

2 cups	chopped vegetables, fresh or frozen	500 mL
1 pkg	(3 oz/85 g) chicken-flavoured instant curly noodles	1
8	eggs	8
½ cup	water	125 mL
1 pkg	chicken soup base (from instant noodle pkg)	1
	Freshly ground pepper, to taste	
	Cooking spray	

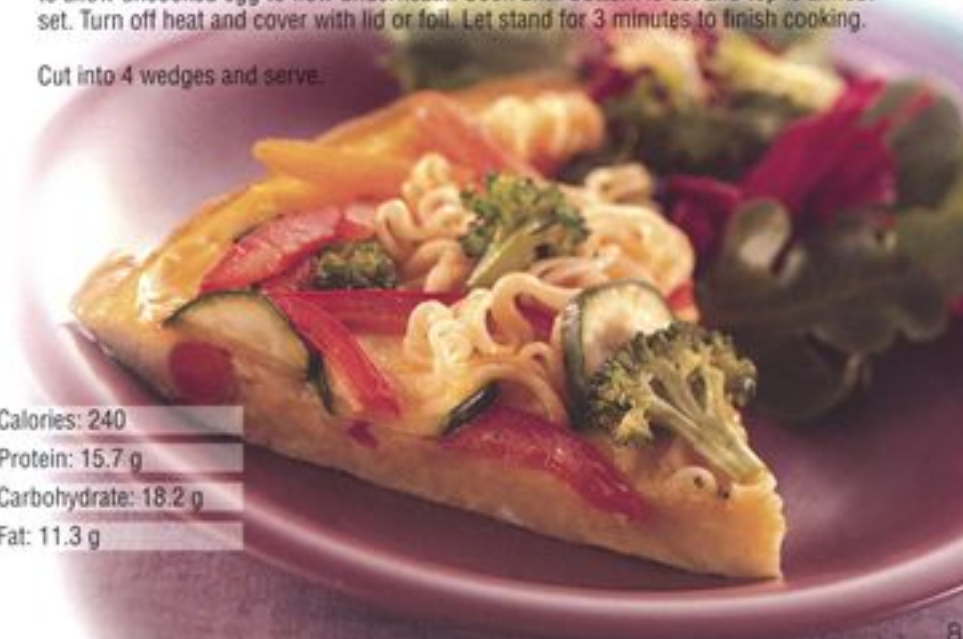
Cook vegetables and noodles in 3 cups (750 mL) boiling water until vegetables are tender-crisp, about 3 to 4 minutes. Drain well and set aside.

Beat together eggs, water, chicken soup base and pepper. Stir in vegetable-noodle mixture.

Spray a 10-inch (25 cm) non-stick skillet with cooking spray. Heat skillet over medium heat.

Pour in egg mixture. As mixture sets at the edges, with spatula, gently lift cooked portion to allow uncooked egg to flow underneath. Cook until bottom is set and top is almost set. Turn off heat and cover with lid or foil. Let stand for 3 minutes to finish cooking.

Cut into 4 wedges and serve.



Calories: 240
Protein: 15.7 g
Carbohydrate: 18.2 g
Fat: 11.3 g

Go for whole grains



Choose whole grain products lower in fat and higher in fibre. Be aware that grain-based foods like doughnuts, croissants, cakes, cookies, pastries and crackers can be high in saturated and *trans* fats.

- Buy whole grain breads, bagels and English muffins rather than doughnuts, pastries or croissants.
- Try whole grain pita or tortilla wedges instead of crackers.
- Choose whole grains and whole grain cereals and pasta.
- Opt for small-sized plain cookies like oatmeal or gingersnaps.
- Indulge in a fruit crumble with an oatmeal-based topping instead of a pie with a crust.

Enjoy lots of vegetables and fruit

Most vegetables and fruits are naturally low in fat. Here's how to keep them that way:

- Enjoy raw, grilled, steamed, microwaved or roasted vegetables rather than fried or breaded vegetables.
- Season vegetables with herbs and spices, citrus juices and flavoured vinegars rather than higher-fat spreads and sauces.
- Make baked potato wedges instead of French fries.
- Enjoy fresh, canned or dried fruits for quick and easy desserts and snacks.





Opt for lower-fat milk products

There are plenty of lower-fat milk products to choose from. Try these ideas to include lower-fat milk products in your healthy eating plan.

Did you know?

Fat is an important source of energy for children's healthy growth and development. Encourage children to eat a variety of foods from *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

- Drink skim, 1% or 2% milk, depending on your personal taste. Keep in mind lower-fat milk is not recommended for children under the age of two.
- Choose yogurt and cottage cheese with 2% or less milk fat (M.F.).
- Substitute cream with evaporated 2% or regular 2% milk.
- Replace some of the cheese called for in recipes with lower-fat varieties (20% M.F. or less).
- Savour lower-fat frozen yogurt instead of ice cream.



Choose lean meats and alternatives

Preparation and cooking methods are the keys to keeping lean meats and alternatives lower in fat. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Trim the visible fat from meat and remove the skin from poultry.
- Roast, broil or barbecue meat, poultry and fish.
- Drain the fat from cooked ground meat and use lean ground meat in recipes when you can't drain the fat.
- Choose lower-fat deli meat such as ham, roast beef, turkey and chicken.
- Enjoy dried beans, peas, lentils and eggs as alternatives.

How

to Use Food Labels

Reading the Nutrition Facts table is a good way to compare the nutritional value of food products. It provides information on the calorie and nutrient content of a food. Keep in mind it is the sum of your food choices over time, not just the nutrient content of any one food, that matters for healthy eating.

Did you know?

Eggs easily fit into a healthy daily fat intake. One large egg contains just 5 grams of fat of which only 1.5 grams is saturated fat and none is *trans* fat.

Information in the Nutrition Facts table is based on a specific amount of food. Compare this to the amount you eat.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1 large egg (50 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 70	
Fat 5 g	8 %
Saturated 1.5 g	8 %
+ Trans 0 g	
Cholesterol 190 mg	
Sodium 55 mg	2 %
Carbohydrate 0 g	0 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 6 g	
Vitamin A 8 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 4 %
Vitamin D 2 %	Vitamin E 10 %
Riboflavin 15 %	Niacin 6 %
Vitamin B ₁₂ 30 %	Folate 15 %

Use the % Daily Value to see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

Eggs...

A Nutritious Choice

Did you know?

Healthy adults can enjoy an egg every day without increasing their risk of heart disease. Research found no significant link between eating eggs and the development of heart disease in healthy individuals.

Source: Hu et al. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1999; 281:1387-94.

Eggs are one of nature's most nutritious foods and an excellent source of high quality protein. Nearly all of the nutrients your body needs can be found in an egg.

One large egg....

- contains only 70 calories
- provides 6 grams of protein
- is an excellent source of folate and vitamin B₁₂
- contains only 5 grams of fat, mostly unsaturated
- contains no *trans* fats
- contains essential omega-3 and omega-6 fats
- yolk is a good source of the antioxidant lutein

Health Check™

...tells you it's a healthy choice.

Health Check™ is a national food information program developed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada to help Canadians make healthy food choices. At the heart of the program is the Health Check™ symbol. All shell eggs qualify for the Health Check™ symbol, which tells consumers that eggs make the grade for nutrient criteria based on *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

† Enjoying a variety of foods is part of healthy eating. Eggs are a nutritious food and like many foods should be eaten in moderation. Canadian egg producers financially support the Health Check™ education program. This is not an endorsement.



For more information about Health Check™ visit www.healthcheck.org.

Shredded Omelette Primavera

Number of servings	2
Preparation time	10 minutes
Cooking time	12 minutes

	Cooking spray	
1	small onion, cut into thin wedges	1
1	green or red pepper, seeded and thinly sliced	1
1	carrot, thinly sliced	1
1 cup	small broccoli flowerets	250 mL
1 tbsp	water	15 mL
2 tsp	instant chicken bouillon mix	10 mL
4	eggs	4
¼ cup	water	50 mL
	Salt and pepper, to taste	
	Tomato pasta sauce, heated	

Spray a non-stick skillet with cooking spray. Sauté onion, peppers, carrot and broccoli with 1 tbsp (15 mL) water and chicken bouillon mix over medium heat until tender-crisp; set aside and keep warm.

Beat eggs with ¼ cup (50 mL) water; season with salt and pepper. Spray an 8-inch (20 cm) non-stick skillet with cooking spray. Heat skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in one third of egg mixture. As mixture sets at the edges, with spatula, gently push cooked portions towards centre. When eggs are almost set, slide onto a warm plate.

Repeat with remaining egg mixture to make 2 more omelettes, stacking them onto a plate.

Roll the stack of omelettes together to form a cylinder. Slice crosswise into thin shreds. Divide the shredded omelettes between two serving plates. Top with tomato pasta sauce and serve with sautéed vegetables.

Calories: 210
Protein: 14.7 g
Carbohydrate: 12.9 g
Fat: 11.4 g



Small Changes

Make a Difference

Even small changes can make a big difference. That's good news because most people make successful changes in small steps. Write down one or two small changes you can make to improve your eating and activity habits.

Consider these suggestions:

- What nutritious foods can you enjoy more often?
- Can you change one of your cooking methods?
- Could you benefit from making a substitution?
- What can you do to increase your physical activity?

Example: • I'll pack fruit in my lunch each day.

The healthy eating and activity change(s) I will make:

1. _____
2. _____

Success in changing habits comes after practicing changes almost every day for at least several weeks. These changes then become a habit. Use this chart to track your progress over 6 weeks. Put a check mark down for every week you successfully maintain each change.

	Change 1	Change 2
Week 1		
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4		
Week 5		
Week 6		

A healthy lifestyle is about the choices you make over time. When you have successfully maintained a change for more than a month, think about introducing another small change to improve your eating or activity patterns. Making one or two small changes at a time can go a long way toward achieving a healthier lifestyle.

For more information on healthy eating or to find a registered dietitian in your area, contact your local health department or visit www.dietitians.ca.

Want more recipes?

Go to www.eggs.ca or contact your provincial egg organization (see back page for contact information).

For additional copies of this booklet or other information, contact:

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