



**IRISH HEART
FOUNDATION**
Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

HEALTHY EATING

to reduce your risk
of heart disease
and stroke



Healthy eating is essential for good health. What you eat can either protect you or increase your chances of getting heart disease or having a stroke.

This leaflet will give you tips for a healthy and enjoyable eating plan which is also good for your heart.

The key to healthy eating is to eat a wide variety of foods.



The Food Pyramid way

The key to healthy eating is to eat a wide variety of foods. Using the Food Pyramid (on the next page) as a guide will help make sure you get all the vitamins, minerals and goodness you need from your food. Choose most foods from the bottom two shelves, smaller amounts from the next two shelves and a very small amount from the top shelf.

The number of servings you need each day (for adults and children) is given for each of the four main shelves. Choose whatever food plates you like to make up your total number from each shelf. Eat only small amounts from the top shelf.

Does your diet add up?

Do the foods you eat every day add up to the Food Pyramid way? Just write down everything you had to eat or drink yesterday. Then add up the number of servings for each shelf and compare them with the plate servings on the Food Pyramid. How did you do? What changes could you make?

Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion size.

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Choose **very small** amounts



Choose any **2**



Choose any **3**



Choose any **5**



Choose any **6+**



Drink water regularly - at least 8 cups a day



Fats, High Fat/Sugar Snacks, Foods and Drinks

Use sparingly – choose fats high in monounsaturates or polyunsaturates.
Limit fried foods to 1-2 times a week. Only have small amounts of high fat/sugar snacks and drinks and not too often.



Meat, Fish, Eggs & Alternatives

Choose lean cuts of meats. Eat oily fish.



Milk, Cheese & Yogurt

Choose low fat varieties.



Fruit & Vegetables

Choose green leafy vegetables and citrus fruit frequently.
Fruit juice only counts for one serving, each day.



Bread, Cereals & Potatoes

Eat these foods at each meal – high fibre is best.



FOLIC ACID - An essential ingredient in making a baby. You can get folic acid from green leafy vegetables but if there is any possibility that you could become pregnant then you should be taking a folic acid tablet (400 micrograms per day).

Tips for each shelf of the Food Pyramid

Bottom shelf - Breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice *(6 or more servings a day)*

These foods are high in energy, but low in fat. It's what you put on bread or the sauce you use with pasta or rice that makes them high in fat. Choose wholegrain and wholemeal varieties of bread, rolls and breakfast cereals. Try leaving the skin on potatoes.

Fruit and vegetables *(5 servings a day)*

Fruit and vegetables are almost fat-free, packed with vitamins, minerals and fibre. Overcooking vegetables destroys vitamins. Try steaming, microwaving or boiling vegetables in a little water with the saucepan lid on. Frozen vegetables are just as good as fresh. Try the many ways of enjoying fruit - fresh, dried, stewed, tinned in its own juice or as fruit-juice.

Milk, cheese and yoghurt *(3 servings a day for children and adults and 5 for teenagers or for pregnant or breast-feeding mothers)*

These foods are good sources of calcium and vitamin D for strong bones and protein, the building block for all parts of the body. If you are overweight or have high cholesterol, choose low-fat varieties (they have the same amount of calcium as full fat varieties).

Meat, poultry, fish and alternatives *(2 servings a day, 3 during pregnancy)*

These foods are a good source of protein and iron (for healthy blood) - red meat is the richest source of iron. Choose lean red meat (for example, beef, lamb or pork) about 3 times a week and frequently replace with poultry. Have oily fish such as sardines, mackerel, trout, herring or salmon at least twice a week. They help thin the blood and prevent clotting.

The top shelf of the Food Pyramid (*very small amounts*)

Spreads - Choose a low-fat polyunsaturated or monounsaturated spread and spread it thinly. A rough guide is no more than one ounce of low-fat spread a day (roughly two to three pats). If you don't like spread, use no more than half an ounce of butter a day.

Oil - Choose a pure polyunsaturated or mono-unsaturated oil and use it in small amounts. Oils are 100% fat and they are very high in calories.

Crisps, savoury snacks, biscuits, cakes, sweets and chocolate - These foods are high in saturated fat. Too much saturated fat in the diet increases cholesterol levels. Many savoury snacks are also high in salt, which may cause high blood pressure. They should not replace meals but you can enjoy them as an occasional treat.

Alcohol - Small amounts of alcohol may provide some protection against heart disease, but there is not enough evidence to recommend including alcohol as part of a heart healthy diet. Drinking large amounts of alcohol can increase blood pressure and may damage the liver and heart.

If you do drink, spread your drinking over the week, keep some days alcohol-free and do not drink more than the recommended upper limits: for men 17 standard drinks a week and for women 11 standard drinks a week.

1 standard drink (10 grams of alcohol)
= one half pint of beer, stout or lager
= one small glass of wine
= one pub measure of spirits (whiskey, vodka or gin)

Remember that alcohol is a drug and may be a risk for other health problems.

How can I reduce weight?

- Follow the general guidelines in this leaflet and see our **Lose weight** leaflet for more information.
- Choose less foods from the top shelf of the Food Pyramid.
- Choose lower-fat foods from the other shelves.
- Watch the size of your portions.
- Choose five portions from the fruit and vegetable shelf and six servings from the bottom shelf.
- Aim for a gradual weight loss of one to two pounds a week.
- Make small changes that you can keep up for life, not just for a few weeks.

Physical activity keeps your heart healthy

Any activity is better than none at all, particularly if you are not very active. So start small and add on extra minutes, or that extra session when you feel ready. Walking is an excellent and easy activity once you have a comfortable pair of shoes and a safe route. Look out for the Irish Heart Foundation's Slí na Sláinte (path to health) signs throughout the country.



The Irish Heart Foundation recommends that you are physically active for at least 30 minutes on five days of the week. Rather than one continuous session, you can build up 30 minutes or more of activity over two to three shorter sessions. For best results, do something you enjoy.

If you are trying to lose weight, you need to be active for a longer period of time. The goal is for 60 to 75 minutes at a moderate intensity on 5 days a week or to spread the 300 minutes or more over the whole week. This will take some time and determination to build into your routine.

Low-fat cooking for a healthy heart

- Oven-bake, grill, poach, stir-fry or dry-fry food with a low-fat spray instead of frying.
- If you are using oil, measure out the oil with a spoon, rather than pouring the oil. Use no more than 1-2 tablespoons for four people.
- Buy the leanest mince that you can and drain off the fat, while cooking.



- For your main meal, a portion of chicken and lean meat should be no more than four ounces (100 grams) and about six ounces (150 grams) for fish.
- Add plenty of vegetables to stews, casseroles, curries, sweet and sour, stir-fry and other dishes.
- Use tomato based sauces instead of creamy sauces.
- Use low fat-milk and low-fat cheese.
- Use light mayonnaise in coleslaw and salad dressing sparingly.

Please make a donation today

The Irish Heart Foundation is Ireland's only charity dedicated to the reduction of death and disability from heart disease and stroke. Over 90% of our funding comes from public and business donations. We depend on your goodwill and generosity to continue our work.

If you found this booklet useful, please help our charity to continue to provide heart and stroke information by donating today.

You can make your donation today:

By post: Irish Heart Foundation,
c/o 4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Online: www.irishheart.ie

By phone: 01 6685001

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Laser Only

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Direct debit (monthly donation)

Amount: €10 €15 €18 €21*
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* If you are a PAYE tax payer, gifts of €250 in one year (€21 per month) could be worth up to an extra 70% to us at no extra cost to you.

** Last 3 digits on the signature strip on the reverse of your card.

Do you need a postal receipt: Yes No
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I would like to volunteer to help the Irish Heart Foundation

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IRISH HEART FOUNDATION

Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

Irish Heart Foundation,
c/o 4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Phone: +353 1 668 5001

Fax: +353 1 668 5896

Email: info@irishheart.ie

Heart and Stroke Helpline:

1890 432 787

Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm

Web:

www.irishheart.ie

www.stroke.ie



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Funding:

The Irish Heart Foundation is the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke and relies on charitable donations for 90 per cent of its funding. We support, educate and train people to save lives, campaign for patients, promote positive health strategies, support research and provide vital public information. We need your support - through donations, as a volunteer or on our training courses.

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Feadhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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