

# Eating for a Healthy Heart

**M**any people know that a high-fat, high-cholesterol diet increases the chances of having a heart attack, stroke or some form of cancer, but many of our favorite foods are high in fat and cholesterol. How can we protect ourselves from heart disease and still enjoy our food?

First, we need to know how much is enough. The American Heart Association recommends that we limit our cholesterol intake to 300 milligrams per day and total fat to less than 30 percent of the day's calories, including no more than 10 percent calories from saturated fat sources.

All cholesterol and most saturated fats are found in animal foods, so that's a good place to begin. People can improve their diets without radical shifts in their eating habits simply by cutting back on the amount of meat, eggs and dairy products they eat and by eating more fruits, grains, vegetables and legumes, such as dried peas, beans and lentils.

It's important to check food labels for the saturated fat content, even if a label says "low cholesterol." Try



not to choose foods with hydrogenated oils or with tropical oils, such as palm oil.

At the same time, people can reduce their dietary fat in specific ways, including the following:

- Add less fat, in the forms of butter or margarine, dressings and sauces, or no fat at all to food at the table.
- Cook with less fat, whether oil, shortening, butter or margarine,

or no fat at all, either using a nonstick pan or microwaving, baking, broiling or poaching.

- Substitute low-fat or nonfat snacks for high-fat snacks.
- Purchase low-fat or nonfat versions of favorite foods.
- Learn to order low-fat meals in restaurants.

Remember, it's important to be patient during periods of transition. Old habits die hard, and the best way to switch to a heart-healthy diet is to make the new food as appealing and enjoyable as possible.

To learn more about eating right for your heart and your health, ask your healthcare provider to help you plan a program of health-supporting eating.