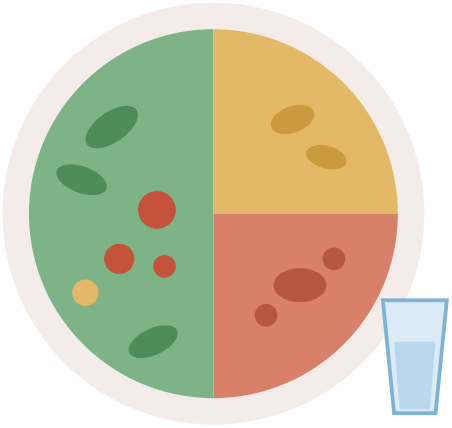
EquaHeart

# Heart-healthy eating

Diet influences blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose (blood sugar) and weight. Small, sustained changes to everyday meals have more benefit than any single food.

## 1 A balanced plate



- **Half:** vegetables and fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned without added salt or sugar)
- **Quarter:** whole grains such as oats, brown rice, barley and whole wheat
- **Quarter:** protein foods, choosing plant-based sources more often, such as beans, lentils, tofu and nuts
- **Water** as the drink of choice

## 2 Reduce sodium (salt)

**2,760**
mg a day: the Canadian average

Aim for **less than 2,300 mg of sodium a day**, or **less than 2,000 mg** with hypertension. About **three-quarters** of dietary sodium comes from processed and prepared foods.

## 3 Reading food labels




Since January 2026, packaged foods high in **sodium, sugars or saturated fat** must display a "High in" symbol. Use it and the % Daily Value (**5% or less is a little; 15% or more is a lot**) to compare products.

## 4 Practical tips

- Prepare meals at home more often, and share meals when possible.
- Limit alcohol; less is better for heart health.
- If you take warfarin or have kidney disease, consult your care team before major dietary changes.
- A registered dietitian can help you develop a personal plan.

## 5 Healthier choices

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ~~White bread, white rice~~ | → **Whole grain bread and rice** | ~~Deli and processed meats~~ | → **Legumes, fish, poultry, tofu** |
| ~~Butter, lard~~ | → **Olive or canola oil** | ~~Chips, cookies~~ | → **Unsalted nuts, fruit, yogurt** |
| ~~Soft drinks and juice~~ | → **Water or unsweetened milk** | ~~Salt at the table~~ | → **Herbs, spices, lemon, garlic** |

## 6 Evidence-based eating patterns

### Mediterranean diet
Vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, whole grains, olive oil and fish.

### DASH diet
Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension: vegetables, fruit and low-fat dairy; low in sodium.

### Portfolio diet
Combines soy, oats, nuts and plant sterols to lower LDL cholesterol.

**Sources:** Health Canada, Canada's Food Guide; Sodium intake of Canadians in 2017; front-of-package nutrition symbol regulations (in force January 2026). Hypertension Canada guideline, CMAJ 2025. CCS dyslipidemia guidelines, 2021.
This guide is general information and does not replace advice from your healthcare provider or dietitian.

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