

You're young, healthy and are just beginning to explore all that life has to offer. Why think about heart disease or stroke; these are diseases that only happen later in life, right? Think again. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer in America. In 1991, heart and blood vessel diseases killed more than 923,000 Americans. More than two of every five Americans die of cardiovascular disease. Today, more than one in five Americans suffer from some form of cardiovascular disease, with more than 2,500 Americans dying from it each day. Even more concerning is the fact that this silent killer is starting to creep, younger and younger. With fewer Americans getting regular activity and the emphasis on convenient, often high fat, high calorie foods, in our diets, the numbers have become staggering.

There is good news however, the choices you make now can minimize your risk for developing heart disease. This month, Bon Appétit would like to share ways you can improve your statistics and odds of enjoying a long and heart healthy life!

Factors that *increase* your risk for developing heart disease

Factors you can control

Smoking

High blood cholesterol

Obesity

High blood pressure

Diabetes

Factors you can not control

Family history (genetics)

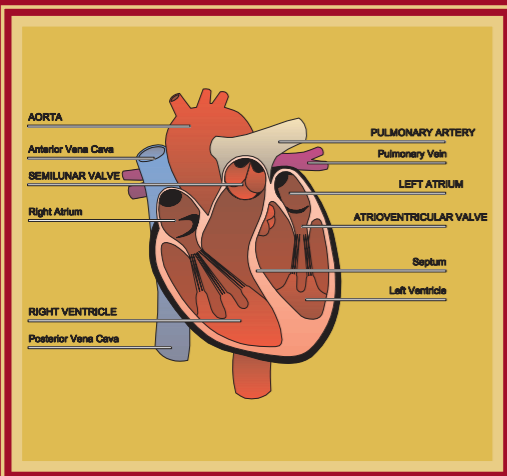
Males at higher risk earlier than females

Age

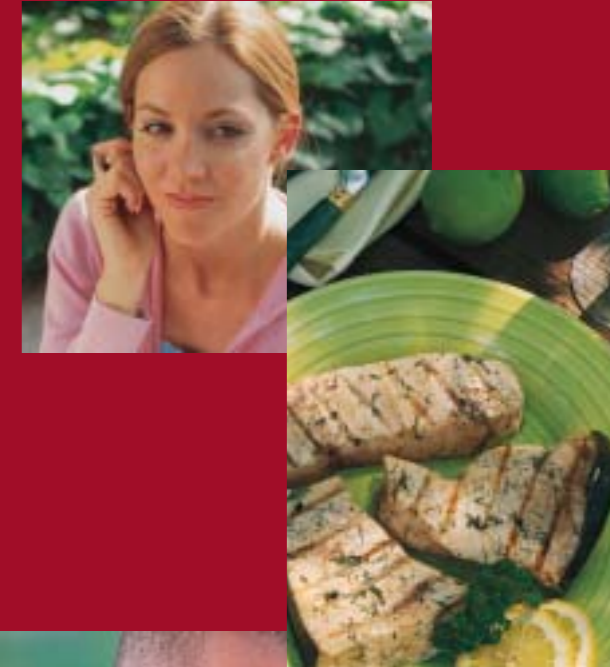
The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk for developing heart disease. But, as you can see, many of the risk factors are in your control . . . with some attention to your dietary patterns. By choosing healthy eating patterns you can maintain a healthy body weight, which reduces your chances of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and problems with cholesterol. More importantly, what you eat plays a big role in how much blood cholesterol is produced in the body. When it comes to prevention, the main focus is fat. For years Americans have been bombarded with the message to reduce dietary fat intake, and most market places are flooded with hundreds of low fat and fat-free options.

The evidence is clear that dietary fat plays a major role in blood cholesterol as well as body weight. However, you might be surprised to learn that fat is not all evil. Fat is a nutrient that is needed in moderate amounts in the diet to help with absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and supply the essential fatty acids linoleic acid and linolenic acid, which your body can not make.

Current recommendations suggest a diet that contains up to **30%** of the calories from fat can be healthy . . . the trick is to recognize that not all fat are created equal. Let's examine the function of fats and the role specific types of fats play in the disease equation!



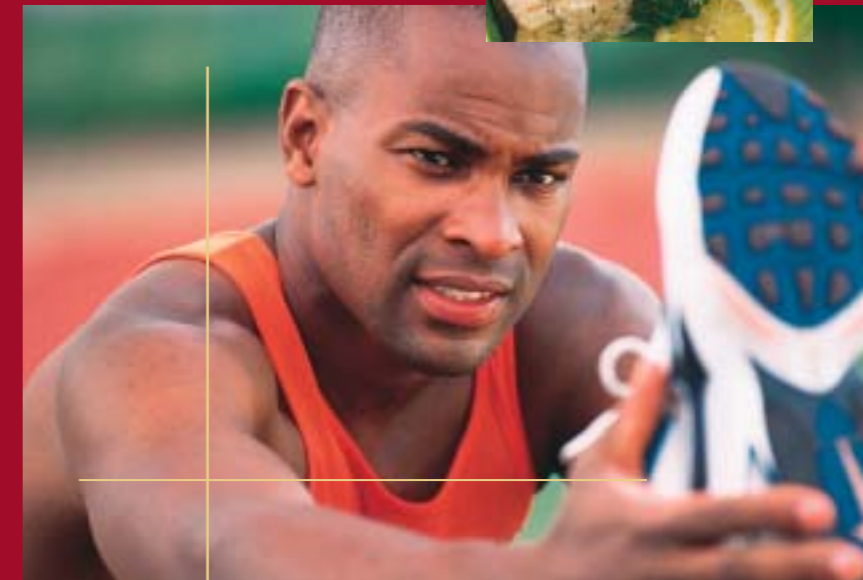
Fat, Cholesterol and Your Heart



This information is not intended to take the place of advice from a health care professional. Check with your physician before starting any diet or exercise program. In addition, while all efforts have been made to ensure the information included in this material is correct, new research that is released frequently, may invalidate certain pieces of data.

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Cholesterol, lipids, fat, saturated fat, trans-fatty acid, omega-3, hydrogenated fat, monounsaturated fat . . . the list goes on and what does it all mean? All of these terms really refer to a group of fatty substances known as lipids. In a nutshell, lipids are packaged in foods in many different forms. Once eaten, these lipids are broken down and “repackaged” for multiple functions in the body. Depending on the type of lipid, some can actually be protective or “heart healthy” while others can promote fatty build up in the arteries that lead to disease. Let’s take a look at these lipids more closely.

Quick guide to fats and cholesterol

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance found among the lipids (fats) in the bloodstream and in all your body’s cells. Cholesterol is not present in plant foods like fruits, vegetables or vegetable oils. Cholesterol is essential for human life but the body makes most of cholesterol that it needs. Some cholesterol is absorbed from the foods you choose.

- **Dietary cholesterol** is found only in foods of animal origin.
- **Blood cholesterol** is formed as a result of the body’s own production of cholesterol and is influenced by the fats that we eat. There are several kinds, but the ones to be most concerned about are low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).
- **LDL Cholesterol** – Low-density lipoprotein is the major cholesterol carrier in the blood. If too much LDL cholesterol circulates in the blood, it can slowly build up in the walls of the arteries feeding the heart and brain.
- **HDL Cholesterol** – Medical experts think HDL tends to carry cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it’s passed from the body. Some experts believe HDL removes excess cholesterol from plaques and thus slows their growth. HDL cholesterol is known as “good” cholesterol because a high HDL level seems to protect against heart attack.

Fat refers to a group of compounds made of glycerol and fatty acids. Fat is one of the three calorie containing nutrients. Although all fats contain the same amount of energy, or calories, they do not all have the same effect on your risk for disease. As you can see, saturated fats and cholesterol tend to raise blood cholesterol while unsaturated fats and omega-3’s can be beneficial. Bon Appétit emphasizes the use of olive and canola oils in all our cooking.

Lipids That Raise Cholesterol	Sources	Examples
Dietary cholesterol	foods from animals	meats, egg yolks, dairy products, organ meats (heart, etc.), fish and poultry
Saturated fats	foods from animals	whole milk, cream, ice cream, whole-milk cheeses, butter, lard and meats
	certain plant oils	palm, palm kernel and coconut oils, cocoa butter
Trans-fatty acids are formed during processing	partially hydrogenated vegetable oils	cookies, crackers, cakes, French fries, fried onion rings, doughnuts, most commercial baked goods

Fats That Lower Cholesterol	Sources	Examples
Polyunsaturated fats	certain plant oils	safflower, sesame, soy, corn and sunflower-seed oils, nuts and seeds
Monounsaturated fats	certain plant oils	olive, canola and peanut oils, avocados
Omega-3 fatty acids	Mainly seafood with higher amounts in fatty fish	Tuna, mackerel, salmon, Sardines, trout as well as soybean oil, canola oil and pumpkin seeds

Although the types of fat you choose play a crucial role in preventing heart disease, the amount of fat is important as well. Most health professionals recommend a diet that contains 30% or less of the calories from fat with an emphasis on choosing more heart healthy fats. In fact, some research suggests that the type of fat may have a bigger impact on disease than the actual amount of fat we eat. However, too much fat can certainly cause concerns with weight and displace other nutrient rich foods. The following chart is a goal for your fat intake according to the calories you consume.

Calorie Level	Total Fat 30% or less (grams)	Saturated Fat less than 10% (grams)
1200	40 or less	less than 13
1500	50 or less	less than 17
1800	60 or less	less than 20
2000	67 or less	less than 22
2200	73 or less	less than 24
2500	83 or less	less than 28
3000	100 or less	less than 33

It is unrealistic for most people to know or even concern themselves with every fat grams in the foods they eat. So while having a total fat gram budget in mind, there are many ways you can hit your goal without worrying about the details. Here are some ways you can reduce your risk of heart disease by changing the fats you eat:

- ✓ **Learn to recognize your fat sources.** Knowing where you are getting fat is the first step to reducing your intake. Also, there are many foods you choose like grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats and dairy that can be balanced with higher fat choices.
- ✓ **Choose more lean meat, skinless poultry and fish.** Trim visible fat and remove skin when possible for even leaner selections.
- ✓ **Go for “five-a-day” . . . that is fruits and vegetables.** These food groups provide vitamins, minerals and fiber, which have all been researched in prevention of heart disease.
- ✓ **Get your grains.** Allow grains, fruits and vegetables to fill up 50-75% of your plate. Include whole grains to provide more fiber and beware of higher fat, more refined options like doughnuts, desserts, muffins, cookies and cakes. Enjoy these in smaller amounts but aim for whole grains as a staple!
- ✓ **Choose skim, 1% or soy milk to meet your need for dairy.**
- ✓ **Go easy on added fat and oils.** Use enough of these products to get flavor but try not to overload your foods. Learn to appreciate the flavors of foods, not just the fats that are on top of them. Focus on using fats that do not raise your cholesterol . . . olive oil, canola oil, nuts and other unsaturated fats can actually help your cholesterol.
- ✓ **Mix in some low fat and non-fat products.** You do not have to eat fat-free to be heart healthy but these products can help when you are trying to manage overall fat intake.
- ✓ **When reducing fat, add flavor from other sources.** Use herbs, spices and other lower fat condiments such as soy sauce, vinegar, mustard or steak sauce in your café to maximize flavor without the fat.
- ✓ **What portion sizes.** Higher fat foods can be enjoyed in smaller quantities while lower fat foods can provide the volume you need to feel full.
- ✓ **Ask for lower fat preparation.** There are many modification that can be made even within your Bon Appétit café. Ask for your meat without sauce or we can go easy on oil in your stir-fry.

A heart healthy diet is something to start **now**. Don’t wait until you develop a problem . . . prevention is the key and the best way to keep your heart working for you for a lifetime!