

## 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 1/2 ounce of butter a day.

**Oil** - Choose a pure polyunsaturated or monounsaturated 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. 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 21 standard drinks a week. For women 14 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 glass 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. 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 at least four 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 signs throughout the country.



We recommend that you be physically active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Rather than one continuous session, you can build up 30 minutes of activity over two to three shorter sessions. For best results, do something you enjoy.

If you are trying to lose weight it is better to be physically active at a moderate level for a continuous and longer period rather than short bursts at a vigorous or fast pace.



## 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 table spoons for a family.
- 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 dressings.

## Local contact:

For more information contact:  
**Your local health board**

or  
**The Irish Heart Foundation,**

4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Phone: 01 6685001  
Email: [info@irishheart.ie](mailto:info@irishheart.ie) Website: [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

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# Good eating

for a happy heart



Healthy eating is essential for good health.

What you eat can either protect you or increase your chances of getting diseases like heart disease.

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

### The Food Pyramid way

Each plate is one serving - except for 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.

The key to healthy eating is to eat a wide variety of foods. Using the Food Pyramid 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.

### 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 Pyramid. How did you do? What changes could you make?

### 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

(4 or more 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 four ounces (100 grams) of lean red meat, i.e. two servings three to four times a week. Have oily fish such as sardines, mackerel, trout, herring or salmon at least twice a week. They help thin the blood and prevent clotting.

### Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices

#### Very small amounts

Choose oil, margarine or low-fat spreads labelled 'High in Polyunsaturates' or 'High in Monounsaturates' which are healthier for your heart. Use small amounts.

#### Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and peas

Choose any 2  
Choose 3 servings during pregnancy.

#### Milk, cheese and yoghurt

Choose any 3  
Choose 5 servings for teenagers, or for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers.

#### Fruit and vegetables

Choose any 4 or more  
Choose green, leafy vegetables, oranges or orange juice most days.

#### Bread, cereal and potatoes

Choose any 6 or more  
Choose high fibre cereals and breads often.  
If you do a lot of physical activity you may need up to 12 servings.

Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day or water based drinks like tea, coffee and diluted drinks

