

# Eating for a healthy heart



# Welcome

## to this Heart Foundation booklet

You have an important role to play in your heart health, and you can enjoy improved heart health by changing what you eat.

If you are ready to make changes to help look after your heart, then this booklet is for you. It suggests quick and simple changes you can make and shows how to check food labels.

We recommend you work through this booklet with your nurse, doctor, dietitian or health professional, as they can provide you with individualised information and advice.

### My checklist

After reading through this booklet, you should be able to check off the following statements:

- ☐ I know what foods are heart-healthy
- ☐ I know the amounts of heart-healthy foods I need to eat
- ☐ I have set personal goals to improve the way I eat
- ☐ I know how to check food labels
- ☐ I know how to plan my meals.

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# Heart-healthy eating

## Why change to heart-healthy eating?

If you already have heart disease, changing the balance of foods you eat can lower your overall risk of heart attack and stroke, and improve your heart health.

If you want to stop yourself getting heart disease, what you eat, how active you are, and being smoke-free can reduce your risk by as much as 80%.

Even if you are on medications for raised cholesterol, raised blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease, following a heart-healthy eating pattern will help to further lower your heart risk.

Apart from the effect on your heart, you'll also probably feel better, have more energy, and it might even help your weight. A heart-healthy lifestyle involves healthy eating, maintaining a healthy body weight, enjoying regular physical activity and not smoking.



Try to make changes one step at a time. As you find new ways of preparing heart-healthy meals, you will find it easier to choose more of the foods that reduce heart risk, and less of those that increase risk.

## Nine steps to heart-healthy eating

We usually eat the way we do because we like it. That means it can be hard to change some of the things we do. So it's important to be prepared.

Here are nine simple steps for heart-healthy eating to help you make changes to what you eat to improve your heart health.

- 1 Share and enjoy meals with family and friends that focus mostly on foods close to how they are found in nature.
- 2 Include plenty of colourful non-starchy vegetables and/or fruit at every meal and for most snacks.
- 3 Choose foods with intact whole grains in place of refined grain products.
- 4 Include some legumes, fish or seafood, eggs, skinless poultry or lean meat at one or two meals each day.
- 5 Use mostly reduced-fat or low-fat milk or milk products (or calcium-rich alternatives) every day.
- 6 Choose healthy oils, nuts and seeds instead of animal and coconut fats.
- 7 Drink water to quench thirst, and limit sugary drinks and alcohol.
- 8 When preparing meals, snacks or drinks, use pepper, herbs, spices or fruit to add flavour rather than using salt or sugar.
- 9 Cut back on junk foods, takeaways and foods high in sugar, salt or saturated and trans fats.



## What is the *Healthy Heart*?

**The most important part of heart-healthy eating is balancing the proportions of foods you eat.**

The *Healthy Heart* (page 7) shows proportionally how much of each type of food to eat over a day or week. Balance your day's eating between the different types of food in roughly the proportions shown.

Similar types of food can be substituted for each other. For example, in a meal kūmara can be eaten instead of whole grain bread.

There are different ways to follow a heart-healthy eating pattern, but the common themes are:

- plenty of vegetables and fruit
- some grain foods and starchy vegetables, legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, lean poultry and meat and reduced-fat milk, yoghurt and cheese, and healthy oils, nuts and seeds
- cutting back on and mostly avoiding junk food, takeaways and foods high in saturated or trans fats, salt and sugar.

Remember, it's your overall dietary style that matters most – the total package of what you eat.

There is no one thing that you do or don't eat that makes you healthy – it's how it all fits together as a whole. That means you can focus on the overall style, and getting the basics right, without feeling guilty for the occasional indulgence.



**eat  
most**  
vegetables  
& fruit

**eat some**  
grain foods &  
starchy vegetables

legumes, fish, seafood,  
eggs, poultry & meat

milk, yoghurt  
& cheese

healthy oils,  
nuts & seeds

**CUT BACK ON** junk foods, takeaways & foods or drinks high in sugar, salt or saturated & trans fats

Think about what you eat over a day.  
How does what you eat compare to the *Healthy Heart*?

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks / other
<b>eat most</b> vegetables & fruit				
<b>eat some</b> grain foods & starchy vegetables				
<b>eat some</b> legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, poultry & meat				
<b>eat some</b> milk, yoghurt & cheese				
<b>eat some</b> healthy oils, nuts & seeds				
<b>cut back on</b> junk food & takeaways				

As well as the type of food, it's also important to eat the right amount of food.

Follow the proportions in the *Healthy Heart* to guide what you eat over a day.

- Eat a variety of foods to get a range of nutrients.
- Similar types of food can be substituted for each other.
- Eat regular meals with the right amount of food, so you feel satisfied, not full.
- Use a smaller sized plate.
- Put leftovers in the fridge and take them for lunch the next day.
- Using your hand can be a simple way to check the size of your food portions on your plate – refer to the next page.





# Food portions

Using your own hand can be an easy way to check the size of your portions. When serving up for someone else, use the size of their hand.

## Components of a meal



### Vegetables (non-starchy)

Your two hands cupped together is a good guide for the amount of non-starchy vegetables like carrots, broccoli or cauliflower, you should include at your meal. Include more, if you can.  
**Tip** – choose vegetables from all the colours of the rainbow. Each colour provides a different range of nutrients.



### Grain foods and starchy vegetables or legumes

A portion of grain foods and starchy vegetables is the size of your closed fist. This group includes foods like potato, taro, corn, rice, green banana or a bread roll. A portion of legumes is also the size of your closed fist. Legumes include chickpeas, lentils and beans.  
**Tip** – if you want more than one grain food or starchy vegetable in your meal, reduce the size of each one so the total portion is the size of your fist.



### Fish

The whole of your hand is a good portion guide for a piece of fish.  
**Tip** – your whole hand is about the size of one fish fillet, which is enough for a meal.



### Poultry or meat

The palm of your hand is a guide for a portion of red meat, chicken or pork.  
**Tip** – the thickness of the meat should be about the same thickness as the palm of your hand.

## Snacks



### Vegetables (non-starchy), fruit or nuts

A single portion of vegetables, fruit or nuts is what fits into the palm of your hand.  
**Tip** – this is a good size for your snacks.

# Nine steps to heart-healthy eating

## Step 1. Share and enjoy regular meals with family and friends that focus mostly on foods close to how they are found in nature

Healthy eating is more than simply eating healthy food. Sharing meals with your family and friends can increase your enjoyment of food and encourages you to eat mindfully, rather than being distracted by TV, a device or the world rushing around you.  
 If you sit down to eat a meal, and eat slowly, you are more likely to feel full before you have over-eaten.



**Foods close to nature:** foods that are in their natural state such as fresh vegetables and fruit, legumes, nuts and seeds, eggs, fish, chicken and lean red meat.  
 Some foods like whole grain bread, milk and canned vegetables have been through some processing, however most of the nutritional benefits remain and they are still a heart-healthy option.  
**Highly-processed foods:** tend to be low in fibre, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients (which are natural compounds produced by plants). These foods often contain added saturated fat, sugar and/or salt.

## Meal planning

A heart-healthy meal can be made up of the following parts:

- colourful non-starchy vegetables and/or fruit
- grain foods or starchy vegetables – these include whole grain bread, oats, barley, brown rice, pasta, quinoa, potato, taro, kūmara, corn, cassava or green banana
- legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, skinned poultry and lean meat; reduced-fat milk or milk products
- healthy vegetable oils, nuts, seeds or avocado. Alternative spreads include hummus, pesto or margarine spread.

Flavourings are optional – herbs, spices are your best choice to add flavour as they don't usually include any added sugar or salt.

When selecting sauces, relishes, or other spreads, pay close attention to the food labels (see page 40) – less is best when it comes to the three s's (saturated fat, sugar and salt).



## Step 2. Include plenty of colourful non-starchy vegetables and/or fruit at every meal and for most snacks



*Kia kaha te kai ngā hua whenua me ngā hua rākau*

Vegetables and fruit are full of vitamins, minerals and fibre. These keep our body and brain working properly and are protective against poor health.

Eating at least five serves (400g) of vegetables and fruit each day has been associated with lower rates of heart disease, cancer and obesity, and lower cholesterol and blood pressure.

Eating plenty of foods with lower energy density, like non-starchy vegetables and fruit, can help manage body weight because we fill up on foods with fewer calories. If we consume too much energy, our body stores the fuel, leading to weight gain.



What proportion of your shopping trolley is vegetables and fruit?

Potatoes, kūmara, corn, yams, cassava/tapioca, green banana and taro are not included under 'vegetables' because they are in the 'Grain foods and starchy vegetables' group (next section). This is because they have more starch and kilojoules per serving than other vegetables.

### What is a serve?

A serve is ½ cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup of raw vegetables, 1 carrot, 1 medium apple, 2-3 small apricots or plums, ½ cup of canned (in natural juice) or frozen fruit.

### How many serves should I eat?

- **For general health:** eat 5+ serves a day (3+ serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit).
- **For heart health:** aim to eat at least 3-4 serves each day of vegetables, and 3-4 serves of fruit.
- **For people with diabetes:** fruit may need to be limited and spread across the day. Fruit size matters, e.g. choose a bobby banana rather than a large one.

### What does 7-8 servings look like?

**Breakfast:** 1 kiwifruit on cereal or 1 omelette with ½ cup of spinach and mushrooms

**Lunch:** Salad or coleslaw with dressing or 1 large tomato in a sandwich, 1 peach

**Dinner:** 1 cup of cooked green vegetables, ½ cup of cooked orange or red vegetables

**Snacks:** 1 carrot with hummus, 1 orange

Vegetables and fruit should often be eaten instead of other foods, rather than in addition. So swap a muffin for an apple, or eat a bit less meat and add another vegetable at dinner.

Frozen veges retain most of their nutritional value and are a cheap way of bulking out a meal. They also minimise waste.

Vegetables and fruit are often cheaper at fruit and vegetable stores, Asian food shops or local markets.

## Make a change – vegetables and fruit

### Add more

- Add one more vegetable or fruit to a meal or snack.
- Have vegetables and/or fruit at every meal.
- Fruit tastes great with breakfast, as an easily portable and affordable snack, or instead of dessert.
- Vegetables add flavour and goodness, e.g. add lettuce and tomato to a sandwich; or serve half a plate of vegetables with dinner.
- Choose vegetables and fruit in a variety of colours to get a wide range of nutrients.
- Fresh, frozen and canned all count towards your recommended serves.
- Around 40% of the food in your weekly shopping trolley should be vegetables and fruit.

### Healthier cooking styles

- For variety try steaming, stir-frying, baking, grilling or microwaving.

### Food to go

- Grapes, vegetable sticks or cherry tomatoes make easy on-the-go snacks.





**Save dollars**

- Buy fruit and vegetables in season, or use frozen or canned varieties. Look for varieties lower in sugar and/or salt.
- Have double servings of cheaper varieties of vegetables such as cabbage, pumpkin, onions or canned tomatoes.
- Frozen veges are good for you and minimise any waste.
- A can of tomatoes can extend a meal.
- Trade excess seasonal fruit with neighbours.
- Buy vegetables that store well (kūmara, pumpkin) when they are cheaper.
- Adding grated vegetables can add flavour and texture and extend most meat dishes.
- Find a good local fruit and vegetable shop or local market.

Fruit and vegetables might seem expensive, but they're not when you compare like with like. An apple at \$3.99/kg is cheaper than potato chips at \$10.60/kg (based on \$1.59 for 150g).



### Step 3. Choose intact whole grains in place of refined grain products

**eat some**  
grain foods &  
starchy vegetables

*Kia āhua nui te kai parāoa, hua pataakai, hua kano, hua whenua māngaro*

Grain foods and starchy vegetables are a good source of carbohydrate, which provides energy to fuel the body and brain. This type of food includes starchy vegetables because of their high carbohydrate content. Grain foods and starchy vegetables are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Choose whole grain and high-fibre carbohydrate foods as these are protective against heart disease. Fibre helps the bowels work properly and improves cholesterol and glucose levels.

**Which foods fit here?**

**Grain foods:** oats, barley, brown rice, whole grain bread, quinoa, buckwheat, millet, whole grain wraps, rēwena, chapatti, roti, breakfast cereals, tapioca, sago, amaranth, congee.

**Starchy veges:** potato, Māori potatoes, kūmara, corn, parsnip, yams, taro, green banana, cassava.

### What is an intact whole grain?

A whole grain food is one with the words 'whole', 'whole grain', 'oats', 'oat bran', 'bran', 'kibbled wheat', 'rye', or 'barley' near the beginning of the ingredients list, or one which has been less-refined e.g. quinoa, buckwheat, millet, brown rice.

The best whole grains are those that contain the intact grain. This is where you can see visible chunks of grain, rather than the grain being ground or crushed.

Refined carbohydrates (e.g. white bread, white flour, sugar, bakery items, low-fibre cereals) differ from whole grains. They have been heavily processed and contain fewer nutrients, less naturally occurring fibre, and their energy is used up quickly. They do not have heart health benefits.

Products can still call themselves whole grain even if the intact grain has been crushed or ground.

### What is a serve?

A serve of whole grain is 1 slice of whole grain bread, ½ whole grain roll, ½ cup cooked porridge, ⅓ cup cooked brown rice or wholemeal pasta or natural muesli. A serve of starchy vegetables is 1 small potato or 1 small round of taro.

### How many serves should I eat?

- **For general and heart health:** eat 3 serves of whole grains a day. There are likely to be greater benefits with higher intakes.
- **For people with diabetes:** have some carbohydrate foods at each meal, but not too much or it will raise blood glucose levels too high.

### What does 3 servings of whole grains a day look like?

**Breakfast:** ⅓ cup of natural muesli

**Lunch:** 1 slice of whole grain bread

**Dinner:** ⅓ cup of brown rice or wholemeal pasta

## Make a change – grain foods and starchy vegetables

### Shop smart

- About a quarter of the weekly shopping trolley should be whole grain foods and starchy vegetables.
- Choose brown rice over white rice and whole grain bread over white bread.
- Choose whole grain foods which contain the intact grain, e.g. oats, brown rice or barley.
- Choose whole grain and high fibre breakfast cereals, e.g. traditional oats, whole wheat biscuits or bran flakes.
- Use mostly wholemeal flour when making bread, chapatis, roti or rēwena.

### Size really does matter

- At any meal, eat no more than a fist-sized portion of these foods.
- If you are eating more than one starchy food at a meal, reduce the size of each one so that the total portion of both foods is no more than the size of your fist.

### Try something different

- Try different style breads with cracked grains or seeds.
- Try brown rice, wholemeal pasta, cooked barley, cracked or bulghur wheat.
- Keep the skins on starchy vegetables such as potato and kūmara. The skins contain fibre and many nutrients.



## Step 4. Include some legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, poultry or meat each day



*Kia āhua nui te kai ika, mīti, heihei, rekiumu, hēki*

This food group is a good source of protein, which the body uses for growth and repair. It also supplies iron, zinc and B vitamins. Eating legumes, fish (especially oily fish) and seafood also helps to support a healthy heart.

Legumes are dried peas and beans also known as pulses and come in a variety of shapes and colours. There are many different types including chickpeas, lentils, mung beans, red kidney beans, soybeans, pinto beans, split peas, adzuki beans and cannellini beans. They can either be soaked and cooked from dry, or bought pre-cooked in cans.

Fish is a great alternative to meat, and oily fish has the benefit of providing more heart-healthy omega-3 fats. Oily fish includes: mackerel, sardines, salmon, kahawai, pilchards, silver warehou and herring. Canned fish can also be an affordable option. If you don't eat fish, you can still obtain heart-healthy fats from nuts, seeds, vegetable oils and spreads.

Animal foods can be high in saturated fat. Reducing saturated fat and replacing it with unsaturated fats improves cholesterol levels, a risk factor for heart disease. So when choosing meat or chicken, choose lean cuts or remove the fat. On red meat, this is the white fat and on chicken, the skin.

Limit the amounts of processed meats and sausages eaten, as the fat is hidden. Processed meats can also be high in salt, which can raise blood pressure.

Legumes are a common part of many food cultures around the world, e.g. Mediterranean, Turkish, African, Asian and South American.

Check out the free Heart Foundation e-cookbook *Full o' Beans* at [heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz)

### What is a serve?

A serve is equal to:

- 1 cup cooked dried beans or split peas
- ½ cup cooked soy beans, tofu or tempeh
- 2 small fish fillets, sardines, 150g tuna, 85 - 95g salmon
- 2 eggs
- 1 small skinned chicken breast
- 2 slices cooked lean meat, 1 small lean steak (100g), ½ cup lean mince.

### How many serves should I eat?

- **For general health:** eat 1-2 serves per day.
- **For heart health:** eat legumes 4-5 times each week, eat fish 2 times a week (preferably oily), small piece of chicken or lean meat (up to 1 to 1 ½ servings per day) or vegetarian alternative.



Those who are at increased risk of heart disease can eat up to six eggs per week as part of a heart-healthy diet.



## Make a change – legumes, fish, seafood, poultry...

### Get full of beans

- Add legumes to meals and dishes for variety. For convenience, use canned varieties – for example canned chickpeas, kidney beans or mixed bean salads.
- Add legumes to soups, curries or casseroles, make lentil patties or add them to meat patties. This will also help to reduce the amount of meat used. Lentils cook more quickly than other dried beans.
- Baked beans are a cheap, filling and nutritious way to eat more legumes. Check food labels and choose those lower in sugar and salt.

**Include fish** – See the Best Fish Guide ([bestfishguide.org.nz](http://bestfishguide.org.nz)) for sustainable choices.

- Aim to eat at least 2-3 servings of fish each week, especially oily fish.
- Bake or grill fish with a sprinkle of pepper, herbs and lemon.

### Keep meat lean

- Choose fresh varieties of fish, poultry and meat more often than pre-prepared types
- Remove visible white fat or skin before adding meat to stir-fries, stews, soups or boil-ups.
- Scoop the fat off casseroles, stews and stocks – this is easier if the food is chilled first.
- Cook and drain the fat off mince before adding to other ingredients.
- Change the water half way through a boil-up, or skim off the fat.
- Heat a can of corned beef in hot water, then drain off the fat.
- Use healthy sandwich fillings instead of processed meats, e.g. canned fish, roast chicken, peanut butter, falafels, hummus, boiled egg, reduced-fat cheese and lots of salad vegetables.
- Cook meat cuts on a rack when grilling, barbequing, roasting and baking.

## Step 5. Use mostly reduced-fat or low-fat milk or milk products (or calcium-rich alternatives) every day



**eat some**  
milk, yoghurt  
& cheese

*Kia āhua nui te kai miraka, miraka tepe, tīhi*

This food group is a good source of calcium, protein and some carbohydrate. Calcium is important for bone health.

While two-thirds of the fat in milk products is saturated fat, dairy fat might not be as harmful as once thought. However, given most people in New Zealand are eating more saturated fat than recommended, switching to mostly reduced-fat varieties or using smaller amounts of higher fat dairy products is beneficial.

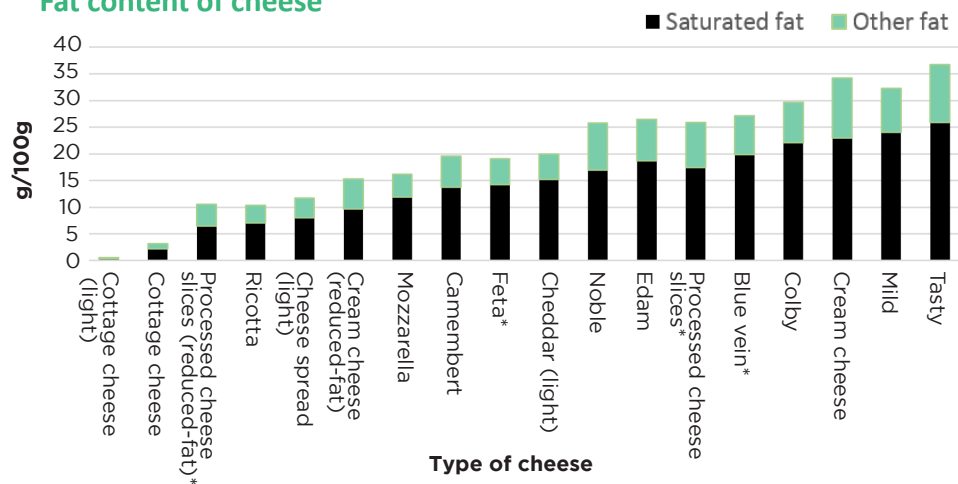
If you are following a heart-healthy way of eating, and your diet is relatively low in total saturated fat (or dairy only makes up a small part of your diet), then the type of milk (full-fat, reduced-fat, or fat-free) you use is probably less important. However the evidence remains that it is better for our hearts to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats.

Yoghurts and milk drinks are often sweetened. Choose unsweetened varieties to limit your intake of added sugar.



Do you choose reduced-fat milk and yoghurt?

## Fat content of cheese



\* Contains more than 800mg/100g sodium

When choosing plant-based milks like soy, almond, rice and coconut milks choose reduced-fat versions and search for milks that are calcium-fortified. Also note that many plant-based milks (apart from soy milk) have less protein than cow's milk.

### What is a serve?

A serving is 1 glass (250mL) milk, 1 pottle (150g) yoghurt, 20g or 2cm cube or 3 tablespoons grated hard cheese (e.g. cheddar or tasty), 30g or 3cm cube semi-hard cheese (e.g. camembert, brie, Edam, feta, mozzarella or reduced-fat cheeses).

### How many serves should I eat?

- **For general health:** eat at least 2 serves per day.
- **For heart health:** eat 2-3 servings each day (or replace with calcium-fortified soy products if milk isn't used).
- **For people with diabetes:** the natural sugars (and any added sugars) in milk and yoghurt contribute to carbohydrate intake.

## Make a change – milk, yoghurt and cheese

### Choose mostly reduced-fat or trim milk

- Gradually change the milk you use to green, yellow or lite blue cap.

### Say cheese

- Use only small amounts of cheese.
- If you're after a reduced-fat cheese which still packs a punch of flavour, try using noble cheese. It has the taste of cheddar but even less fat than Edam.
- Have cottage cheese in sandwiches.



### Check sweetness

- Try unsweetened yoghurt with fresh fruit.
- Choose milk products that have less or no sugars added.

### Watch toppings and drinks

- Keep cream, sour cream, cream cheese, and crème fraîche for special occasions only.
- Instead of regular, sour or reduced cream, use cottage cheese, low-fat sour cream, European-style yoghurt or plain yoghurt on baked potatoes and in dips, or evaporated cream in sauces.
- Substitute full-fat café coffee drinks, milkshakes, smoothies, dairy foods and desserts with trim milk drinks and low-fat yoghurts.

## Step 6. Choose healthy oils, nuts and seeds instead of animal and coconut fats



This food group contains vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, avocado, olives and spreads based on these foods.

Nuts, seeds, avocado, olives and healthy oils (other than palm and coconut oil) contain heart-healthy poly and monounsaturated fats. They are a better choice than foods high in animal fats such as butter, cream and meat fats. Polyunsaturated fats are essential nutrients so it is important to regularly choose some foods rich in these fats. Foods rich in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats help to reduce 'bad' cholesterol – low density lipoprotein (LDL) and increase the 'good' cholesterol – high density lipoprotein (HDL) in the blood.

Swapping saturated fats for heart-healthy fats improves your cholesterol.

- Replacing saturated fat with polyunsaturated fat decreases the risk of heart disease by decreasing your LDL-cholesterol and the total/HDL cholesterol ratio.
- A similar but lesser effect is achieved by replacing saturated fat with monounsaturated fat.

### What do you mean by healthy oils?

Not all oils are created equal. Palm oil and coconut oil contain high levels of saturated fat which can increase your risk of heart disease. While these oils are better for your heart when compared to butter, there are far better plant oils for your heart, such as olive oil.

Unrefined oils, or those which are called 'cold-pressed' or 'extra virgin', have undergone very little processing. Therefore these oils have higher levels of many beneficial compounds, such as antioxidants.



### What is a serve?

1 tsp oil, 1 Tbsp avocado or sunflower or sesame seeds, 1 dessertspoon nuts, nut butter or pumpkin seeds.

### How many serves should I eat?

For heart health: eat 6+ servings per day.

### How many nuts should I eat?

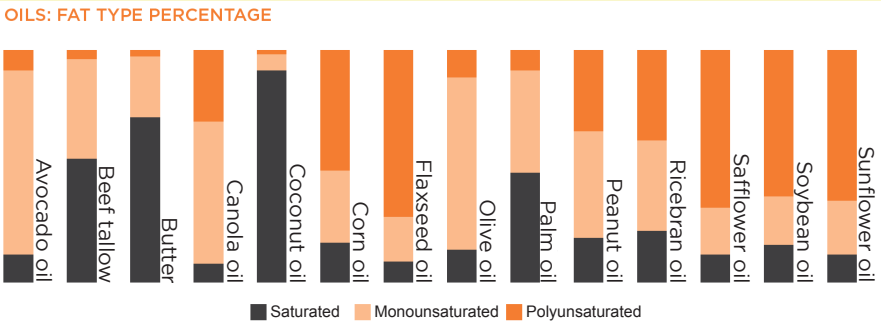
Around 2 Tbsp (30g) nuts or nut spread per day. Choose natural unroasted varieties without added salt or sugar.



What oils are safe to cook with?

Oils which are rich in polyunsaturated fats can form undesirable compounds when heated at high temperatures. For shallow frying, barbequing or stir-frying in the home, we recommend using oils that are both lower in polyunsaturated fat and saturated fat. The best choices from a nutrition, affordability and availability perspective remain olive and canola oils. It is also important to remember to store your oils in a cool, dark place to reduce oxidation.

For heart health, replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats. Choose oils and fats from the graph below that have proportionally less saturated and more unsaturated fats.



Is butter back?

While using small amounts of butter every now and then shouldn't be a problem for most people, there are far healthier fats to choose for heart health. Rather than focusing too much on specific foods (e.g. butter) or nutrients (e.g. saturated fat), it is important to focus on the bigger picture and overall dietary pattern. By following a heart-healthy way of eating, the fats in our diet will take care of themselves.

Choose some foods rich in polyunsaturated and/or monounsaturated fats

Foods rich in polyunsaturated fats			
Brazil nuts	Linseeds	Sesame oil	Sunflower seeds
Flaxseed oil	Pine nuts	Sesame seeds	Walnuts
Fish oil capsules	Pumpkin seeds	Soy oil	Wheatgerm
Grapeseed oil	Safflower oil	Sunflower oil	Wheatgerm oil

Foods rich in monounsaturated fats			
Almond oil	Canola oil	Olive oil	Pistachio nuts
Almonds	Cashew nuts	Olives	Rice bran oil
Avocado oil	Hazelnuts	Peanut oil	
Avocados	Macadamia nuts	Peanuts	

Mostly avoid these foods, which are rich in saturated fats			
Butter	Coconut cream	Kremelta	Paté
Chefade	Coconut milk	Lard	Cream and sour cream
Chicken fat	Coconut milk powder	Lite-butter	Semi-soft butter
Chicken skin	Coconut oil	Palm kernel oil	Shortenings
Cocoa butter	Cream cheese	Palm oil	Suet
Coconut	Dripping	Partially hydrogenated fat	Visible meat fat

What are trans fats?

Trans fat increases our risk of heart disease by increasing the bad (LDL) cholesterol and lowering the good (HDL) cholesterol in our blood. Trans fats are found most commonly in foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, like deep-fried foods and baked foods such as biscuits, cakes and pastries.

## Make a change – healthy oils, nuts and seeds

- Use vegetable oils, mashed avocado, nut or seed butter, hummus or margarine instead of butter or ghee. Alternatively use no spread at all.
- Choose a variety of oils, spreads, nuts and seeds since they provide different nutritional qualities. Oils like olive, canola or avocado oil are good choices for a multi-purpose oil.
- Choose some foods rich in polyunsaturated and/or monounsaturated fats every day and limit foods rich in saturated fats.
- Avoid deep frying foods and cooking at very high temperatures when using oils.
- Purchase oils in a dark bottle and store oils in a cool dark place out of direct light.
- Use the right type of oil for your cooking method, i.e. flaxseed oil for salad dressings instead of stir-frying.
- Avoid re-using oil, especially if the oil has darkened.
- If the oil starts to smoke when it is being heated, start over. Smoking oils produce toxic compounds.
- Have a handful of plain nuts for a snack instead of chips.
- You can roast your own nuts in the microwave or oven (at 100°C).
- Choose salad dressings that have some oil to help absorb nutrients.
- Choose oily varieties of fish for its omega-3 fats. If you don't eat fish, you can still obtain heart-healthy fats from nuts, seeds, vegetable oils and spreads.

## Step 7. Drink water to quench thirst, and limit sugary drinks and alcohol

Drinking fluids is essential for good health. We need about six to eight cups of fluid each day. We get fluid from our food and what we drink. Water (tap, soda water or mineral water) is the best choice. Tea or coffee with low-fat milk, herbal teas, or other low-sugar drinks can provide variety.

Try to avoid high kilojoule drinks (e.g. sugary drinks) as they can contribute to weight gain, raised cholesterol and high blood pressure.

### Sugary drinks

Sugary drinks are a known contributor to tooth decay, obesity and some risk factors for heart disease. They provide little, if any, nutrients and contribute excess energy to the diet. Sugary drinks include juices, cordials, soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milks, sweetened tea or coffee, flavoured water – essentially any drink where 'free sugar' has been added (see Step 9, page 37).

Beverages are the highest contributor to total sugars intake for Kiwi kids and the second highest contributor for adults.

Your taste buds might need a bit of re-educating if you're used to only drinking sweet drinks, but they do get used to the change.



### Alcoholic drinks

Drinking alcohol comes with risks to health, and not drinking alcohol is a healthy choice. The most damaging pattern of drinking is frequent heavy drinking episodes. Alcoholic drinks can contribute to weight gain, high blood pressure and high triglycerides. They contain a lot of kilojoules and no useful nutrients. One standard drink has at least as many kilojoules as a glass of soft drink, with 400–500kJ on average.

### How much is a standard drink?

A standard drink is the amount (volume) of an alcoholic drink that contains 10 grams of alcohol.

Alcoholic drinks	One standard drink
Wine	100ml (sherry glass size)
Spirits, gin, vodka or brandy	30ml (2 Tbsp or 1 'pub' measure)
Ready to drink spirits (8% alcohol or less)	200ml (less than 1 bottle)
Regular beer (5% alcohol)	250ml (less than 1 bottle)
Regular beer (4% alcohol)	330ml (1 bottle)
Light beer	500ml (1 ½ bottles)
Lower carb beer	330ml (1 bottle)
Low alcohol beer (1% alcohol)	3 bottles+ (e.g. Mac's Light)

**To reduce your long-term health risks, in any one day, drink no more than:**

- 2-3 standard alcoholic drinks and no more than 15 standard drinks in a week (for men)
- 1-2 standard alcoholic drinks and no more than 10 standard drinks in a week (for women).

Try having at least two alcohol-free days each week and don't binge drink.

**You can reduce your risk of injury on a single drinking occasion by drinking no more than:**

- 5 standard drinks for men on any single occasion
- 4 standard drinks for women on any single occasion.

However, these limits could be too high for people with excess body fat around their waist, high blood triglycerides, high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation, heart failure or problem-drinking.

### Is it ok to have a glass or two of wine for my heart?

It is not recommended to start drinking for heart-health benefits. If choosing to drink, follow the safe drinking guidelines on the previous page.

For some people with underlying health and heart conditions, it may be best to avoid drinking alcohol. Abstinence from alcohol is recommended in the following conditions:

- uncontrolled high blood pressure
- depression
- congestive heart failure
- chronic active liver disease
- previous haemorrhagic stroke
- medications that interact with alcohol.
- pregnancy/planning pregnancy

Talk to your doctor about whether drinking alcohol is safe for you.

### Make a change – drink water

- Sugary drinks and alcohol can add a lot of calories but don't create a feeling of fullness, making it easy to gain weight. Have water and plain milk for everyday drinks.
- Choose whole fruit rather than drinking juice. It's more filling too.
- Choose plain milk, rather than flavoured milks.
- Gradually reduce the amount of sugar you add to your drinks (e.g. tea and coffee) so that eventually you are adding no sugar at all.
- Instead of sugary soft drinks, try soda water or water flavoured with lemon slices, mint leaves, lime, or fruit pieces.
- Flavoured herbal teas (either cold or hot) can be a refreshing and low sugar alternative to juices and sodas.
- Protein shakes, flavoured milks and yoghurt or dairy smoothies are high kilojoule snack replacements. They are not for thirst quenching.
- If you use alcohol to unwind after a busy day, look for other solutions. Try a short walk, a herbal tea or taking time to relax instead.



## Step 8. When preparing meals use pepper, herbs, spices or fruit to add flavour rather than salt or sugar

### Cut back on salt

Most of the salt we eat comes from processed and ready prepared foods. Salt is listed as sodium on food labels. Limit the amount of salt you add to your meals. Salty foods and added salt can contribute to high blood pressure. Even if your blood pressure is normal, it is important to take steps to keep your salt intake low.

#### Make a change – cut back on salt

- Use herbs, chilli, spices, garlic, lemon, vinegars, unsalted seasonings and highly flavoured vegetables in place of salt in recipes.
- Learn to enjoy the fresh taste of foods without the salt.
- Choose foods with 'no-added-salt', 'unsalted' and 'low-sodium/salt' or 'reduced-sodium/salt'.
- Read food labels – less is best (see page 40). Check the sodium content on the labels of high salt foods. Salt is listed as 'sodium' on the nutrition information panel on food labels.
- Eat only small portions of cured, corned, pickled, smoked, marinated and high salt canned foods.
- Add just a pinch of iodised salt if using salt when cooking.
- Avoid having a shaker or salt mill on the table.
- Avoid rock salt, sea salt, flavoured salts, seasoned salt (lemon pepper, Tuscan), kelp and brine which are all high in sodium.



### Cut back on sugar

Foods low in fat and salt can be high in free sugars. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines free sugars as: "Sugars added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer. It also includes sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates."

The WHO recommends we eat no more than approximately six to twelve teaspoons of free sugar a day. This includes all forms of sugar added to food or drinks and sugar in pre-prepared foods that you buy.

Sugars that are naturally present in heart-healthy foods like unsweetened fruit and skimmed milk are not counted as 'free' sugars.

Foods high in free sugars are typically high in kilojoules and provide few vital nutrients and typically little fibre. These foods should be limited as they can raise cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

#### It's ALL sugar!

Sugar can be called many different names. Look out for these common forms of sugar on the food label: honey, agave nectar, sucrose, rice malt syrup, maple syrup, coconut sugar, glucose, raw sugar, fruit juice, deionised fruit juice, fructose, rice syrup, dextrose or treacle.



## Make a change – cut back on sugar

- Have fruit or vegetables instead of sugar or sugary foods.
- Choose unsweetened yoghurts, adding whole fruit for sweetness if needed.
- Choose canned fruit in water or juice and drain before eating.
- Gradually cut back on the amount of sugar you sprinkle on cereal, or add to your coffee, tea and milk drinks.
- Use fresh fruit to add sweetness to your breakfast cereal, rather than piling on the sugar.
- Cut back on the extra foods you eat that are high in added sugar e.g. cakes, biscuits, sweet bakery items, lollies, and muffins. Try replacing them with healthier options like fruit, yoghurt, nuts, or check out our Heart Foundation recipes for healthier baked options: [heartfoundation.org.nz/wellbeing/healthy-recipes](https://heartfoundation.org.nz/wellbeing/healthy-recipes).
- When choosing processed foods, choose those with the lowest levels of sugar. Remember that the 'per 100g' information on food labels includes naturally-occurring and added sugar. The ingredient list will show how many types of sugar have been added (see page 40 about label reading).



## Step 9. Cut back on junk foods, takeaways & foods high in sugar, salt or saturated and trans fats

These foods include deep fried foods, processed or fatty meats, sweet bakery products, pastries, highly processed foods, salty foods, savoury and sweet snack foods, takeaways and junk food. They are often high in saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, refined carbohydrate and/or salt and low in fibre. These foods aren't healthy choices. It's recommended to cut back on foods in this group and keep them as something to have for a special occasion or an occasional splurge, rather than banning them altogether.

The type of food we eat influences how we feel, how much energy we have and how well we can live our lives. Most people feel much better when they start making changes and cut back on the unhealthy food and drink.

Our food environment often works against these changes, and encourages us to over-eat the wrong foods. Families can start cutting back by setting up their food environment at home so it's easier to make healthy choices.

Cutting back on unhealthy food is also important for our kids. They learn eating habits in childhood that stick into adulthood. There is a perception that healthy eating doesn't matter until people get sick, but what children eat impacts on the future health of their heart. The best way for kids to learn is role modelling from family and whānau, preparing and eating healthy meals.

Keep mostly healthier foods and drinks at home and use the proportions in the *Healthy Heart* to guide food purchases for the week.

Get equipped with a set of 10-20 quick and easy recipes that are the regular 'go-to' recipes.

The Heart Foundation website has a lot of heart-healthy recipe ideas. For more ideas on quick heart-healthy meals, eating out and takeaways, check out the Heart Foundation's recipe books and information at: [heartfoundation.org.nz](https://heartfoundation.org.nz)

## Quick takeaway meal alternatives

Preparing a meal at home can be quicker and cheaper than getting takeaways. When you want convenience, have food ready-to-go at home in the freezer, fridge and pantry, or nip into the supermarket and collect semi-prepared or complete meals.






Eating ready-prepared meals can be costly. To economise, plan your shopping, pre-prepare meals and put together simple meals more often.

If more of your meals are ready-prepared or eaten out, you need to have a good knowledge of the heart-healthy foods in the *Healthy Heart* (see page 7) so you can make careful choices.

### Make a change – junk food

- Use only small amounts of sugar or salt (if any), when cooking and preparing meals, snacks or drinks (see page 34).
- Learn to read food labels and choose ready-prepared foods low in sugar, salt, and saturated fat (see page 40).
- Learn to cook quick and easy meals at home and pack your own snacks. Get the kids involved in cooking.
- Try homemade instead of bought takeaways – it can be quicker and healthier.
- Aim to have takeaways no more than once a week.
- Downsize from a large to a smaller sized takeaway and eat off a smaller plate.
- Try to skip the unhealthy aisles (e.g. junk food and confectionery aisles) when shopping at the supermarket.
- Look for, and avoid, partially hydrogenated fats which are another name for trans fats, found on the ingredients list on food labels.

Make a meal in a few minutes from a quick stop at the supermarket. All of the following heart-healthy meals use four basic parts (see page 12).

		+		+		+		+	
<b>Bean wrap</b>	Carrot, lettuce, tomatoes, capsicum	+	Wholemeal wrap or flat bread	+	Canned chilli beans	+	Unsweetened natural yoghurt	+	Avocado
<b>Hot salad and corn on the cob</b>	Baby spinach and salad vegetables stirred through cooked meat	+	Corn on the cob	+	Cooked chicken or mussels (lightly panfried in healthy oil with lemon)	+	N/A	+	Healthy oil for cooking and used in a vinaigrette
<b>Vegetable soup</b>	Seasonal vegetables, chopped tomatoes	+	Bulgur wheat or barley added to soup Whole grain bread	+	Canned beans and lentils	+	N/A	+	Avocado or nut butter spread on the bread roll. Alternatively margarine spread
<b>Fish, wedges and vegetables</b>	Prepared salad using your favourite seasonal vegetables	+	Homemade oven-baked potato wedges, skins on	+	Frozen (uncrumbed) or fresh fish fillets	+	N/A	+	Healthy oil for cooking
<b>Stir-fry</b>	Fresh or frozen stir-fry vegetables	+	Brown rice	+	Fresh uncrumbed lean schnitzel or skinless chicken cut into strips	+	N/A	+	Healthy oil for cooking Sesame seeds as a garnish
<b>Pasta and salad</b>	Chopped tomatoes (for pasta sauce) and prepared salad or frozen vegetables	+	Pasta (preferably whole grain if available)	+	Canned salmon or tuna	+	A little grated noble or Edam cheese	+	From the oily fish
<b>Pizza and salad</b>	Tomato puree, mushrooms, olives, capsicums and onions as toppings, salad for a side dish	+	Thin wholemeal pizza base	+	Cooked chicken shredded	+	A little grated noble or Edam cheese	+	Olives and salad vinaigrette



# Tool kit

## Label Reading

While we recommend that you eat mostly foods close to nature (many of which don't have a food label), we acknowledge in a busy world processed foods can be a quick and easy option. To help you make better choices here is what we recommend you look out for.

### The ingredients list

The 'ingredients list' on food labels lists ingredients in order of weight, from biggest to smallest amounts used in the product. It can help to identify sources of fat and sugar (see page 35 for a list of different names for sugar), and how many extra ingredients have been added.

### Reading nutrition information panels

Food labels can be confusing with all the different numbers and it can be hard to remember what you should be aiming for. To make things simple we recommend that you look for **less of the three s's** – that is products which contain the least amount of **s**aturated fat, **s**ugar and **s**odium per 100g. Trans fats can be called partially hydrogenated fat in the ingredients list.

The table below is a guide for what to look for on the 'nutrition information panel' on food labels. It is a guide only, and it is important to also consider the whole food and the ingredient list when making your decision.

Choose foods with less energy (kilojoules) if you want to lose weight	Nutritional Information		
	Serving Size: 150g		
Choose foods lower in saturated fat. Replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat reduces your risk of heart disease	Quantity per serving	Quantity per 100g	
	Energy	608kJ	405kJ
Sodium is the harmful part of salt. Eating too much can raise your blood pressure	Protein	4.2g	2.8g
	Fat, total	7.4g	4.9g
Shows how much of the nutrient is in one serving. The serving size is determined by the manufacturer	- Saturated	4.5g	3.0g
	Carbohydrate	18.6g	12.4g
Use the 'per 100g' column to compare foods	- Sugar	18.6g	12.4g
	Sodium	90mg	60mg
Sugar can occur naturally in food or be added. The problem with added sugar is that it adds energy (kilojoules) but not nutrients			

We recommend comparing the 'per 100g' column when comparing products and choosing foods that are:

- higher in fibre
- lower in saturated fat
- lower in sugar
- lower in sodium.

If you are watching your weight, choose foods close to nature and look for nutritious foods that contain less energy (calories/kilojoules).

### Using Health Stars

Health Stars are a front-of-pack labelling system designed to identify healthier choices within broad food categories. The system is designed to help people choose between similar foods at the point of purchase, so it works best for processed and packaged food choices (e.g. breakfast cereals).

The star rating takes into consideration a number of positive and negative nutrients for a particular food. The positive elements include protein, fibre, fruit, vegetable, nut, seed and legume content. The negative elements include energy, sodium, saturated fat, and sugar.

The more stars a product has, the better. Foods with a health star rating of greater than or equal to 3.5 are generally healthier choices. However, it still pays to check the food label to ensure the product is low in saturated fat, sugar and sodium.



## Managing your weight

A heart-healthy lifestyle involves healthy eating, maintaining a healthy body weight, enjoying regular physical activity and not smoking.

To reduce body weight, you need to choose healthy foods and eat fewer kilojoules or calories – the energy found in food. Eating more kilojoules than your body needs can lead to weight gain.

Eating mostly foods close to nature from the *Healthy Heart*, will help to reduce your kilojoule intake. You may also want to try some of the ideas below.



### Set yourself up to win by using subtle strategies like:

- using smaller sized dinner plates
- serve dinner onto plates and put any leftovers away in the fridge immediately
- sitting down at the table to eat and switching off all devices
- put your cutlery down in-between mouthfuls
- stop eating when you are satisfied, not when you are feeling full. Aim to stop eating when you feel about 80% full
- having healthy food easily accessible and keeping treats as something you have when you go out
- hiding any less healthy options out of view and harder to reach
- have a jug of chilled water on the table
- brush your teeth after dinner
- writing down what you eat
- have a cup of herbal tea after dinner to help reduce any cravings for something sweet
- drink a glass of water, if you feel hungry. Often we mistake the feeling of thirst for hunger.

## Make a change - managing your weight

### Eight tips to help you manage your weight:

1. Focus on being healthy and eating well to nourish and look after your body, rather than obsessing about weight.
2. Eat mindfully and enjoy your food, rather than focussing too much on calories or nutrients.
3. Take a look at when and how you eat to identify problem areas, then find a way to stop the trigger. For example, if you pick at food while cooking, chew some gum to make it hard to put other food in your mouth; or if you always buy a chocolate bar when you fill up with petrol, fill up in the morning after breakfast when you're less likely to be tempted.
4. Make movement a part of your day. Aim to do some form of physical exercise most days. Remember exercise can be broken up into short bursts throughout the day too. It all adds up!
5. Don't fall for fad diets, quick fixes, or miracle cures. They don't work long term. If it sounds too good to be true, chances are it is.
6. Fill up on non-starchy veges:
  - make half your meal non-starchy veges
  - serve up the non-starchy vege portion of your meal first
  - snack on non-starchy veges during the day.
7. Make at least two days a week alcohol-free.
8. Eat fewer and smaller amounts of treat foods. Eat mindfully so that you can truly savour these foods when you do. When you eat mindfully you are less likely to overeat.

## Healthy snacking

Snacks are optional. Many people don't need to snack or only need a small snack. However, lean, active people might need more snacks during the day.

If you do eat a snack, vegetables or fruit are the best choice. Carrot or celery snacks or salad veges are low kilojoule choices. For a more substantial snack, yoghurt, nuts or any of the suggestions below are good options.

### Snack suggestions

#### Vegetables and fruit:

- a piece of fruit
- 1/2 cup of fruit salad
- a small bobby sized banana
- carrot or celery cut into sticks, with hummus
- a Vietnamese rice paper roll filled with fresh vegetables.



#### Grain foods and starchy vegetables:

- plain unsalted popcorn
- whole grain crackers (e.g. corn thins) or a slice of whole grain toast with avocado or hummus and sliced tomato
- a small baked potato or kūmara with salsa.

### Legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, poultry and meat:

- edamame beans, unsalted
- dried chickpeas, unsalted
- baked beans on a slice of whole grain toast
- hummus and vegetable sticks
- tuna or salmon on whole grain crackers or a slice of whole grain toast
- a boiled egg.

### Milk, yoghurt, cheese:

- a pottle unsweetened yoghurt
- a cup of milk
- a homemade smoothie (milk or unsweetened yoghurt plus fruit)
- cheese cubes and tomatoes.

### Healthy oils, nuts and seeds:

- unsalted nuts and/or seeds
- nut butter on whole grain toast
- avocado on whole grain toast.



# Pantry and freezer staples on a budget

These foods are healthier affordable foods to keep in your pantry or freezer. They can be used to bulk out a meal, or make a meal when fresh foods are unavailable.

## Vegetables and fruit:

- frozen peas, carrot, broccoli and mixed vegetables
- canned tomatoes
- canned fruit, in natural unsweetened juice.

## Legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, poultry and meat:

- baked beans
- canned kidney beans, chickpeas, butter beans
- dried lentils
- eggs
- canned fish, in springwater
- plain frozen fish or prawns.

## Grain foods and starchy vegetables:

- frozen or canned corn kernels
- kūmara, potatoes
- plain oats
- brown rice, barley and quinoa.

## Milk, yoghurt, cheese:

- powdered milk.






## Healthy oils, nuts & seeds:

- peanut butter
- olive oil
- seeds i.e. sesame, sunflower, flaxseeds
- nuts i.e. peanuts, almonds, walnuts.

# Meal Planner






Here are some examples of what you could eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner over one day.

## Example one






		+		+		+		+	
<b>Breakfast</b>	Banana		Oats or bircher muesli				Milk and natural yoghurt		Sprinkle of nuts and/or seeds
<b>Lunch</b>	Piece of fruit Salad	+	Whole grain bread	+	Canned fish	+	Grated cheese	+	Salad dressing Avocado Margarine spread
<b>Dinner</b>	Stir-fry vegetables	+	Brown rice or quinoa	+	Stir-fry tofu, seafood, skinless poultry or lean meat				Oil for cooking
<b>Snacks (if needed)</b>	Piece of fruit						Yoghurt		Raw nuts



Example two

		+		+		+		+	
Breakfast	Grilled tomato	+	Whole grain bread	+	Baked beans and/or poached or boiled eggs	+		+	Avocado
Lunch	Piece of fruit Salad filling	+	Whole grain wrap or pita	+	Shredded chicken, canned fish or hummus	+	Grated cheese	+	Margarine spread
Dinner	Large salad	+	Baked small kūmara or corn on the cob	+	Baked/grilled meat, skinless chicken, fish or tofu	+			Vinaigrette
Snacks (if needed)	Piece of fruit						Glass of milk		Raw nuts

Here is some space for you to plan a day's worth of meals for yourself

		+		+		+		+	
Breakfast		+		+		+		+	
Lunch		+		+		+		+	
Dinner		+		+		+		+	
Snacks (if needed)									

## Making a change

There are lots of changes suggested in this booklet. Try to make changes one step at a time. As you find new ways of preparing heart-healthy meals, you will find it easier to choose more of the foods that reduce heart risk, and less of those that increase risk.

### Tips for making changes

Most people find it hard to make changes. Here are some tips to help make it easier.

- Work out one thing you would like to change – this will be your goal.
- Take small steps to achieve your goal – start with steps you can do easily.
- Once you get used to this change, set yourself a new goal.
- Get support – ask your family and friends to help you.
- Make a plan.

### My plan for change



#### What do you want to change first?

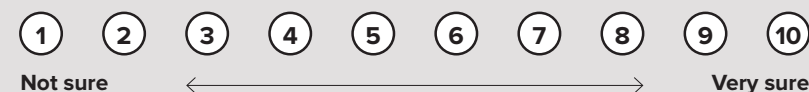
#### My SMART goal is:

Try setting a SMART goal. This means what you want to do should be:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**ealistic, and have a
- T**ime-frame

### What small steps will you take to achieve this goal?

### How sure are you that you can do this?



If it is less than 7, think about what it would take to increase your confidence, or think about starting with a smaller step.

#### Who could help you to achieve your goal?

For example, your family may want to make changes with you.

#### What other support would help you achieve your goal?

For example, community support groups, dietitian.

### What might get in the way of you achieving your goal?

How will you overcome these problems?

How did it go in your first week? Was it easy to do? Do you need more time on this step?

How did it go in the next week? Are you ready to do something more?

## Hearts fit for life

The Heart Foundation is the charity that works to stop all people in New Zealand dying prematurely from heart disease and enable people with heart disease to live full lives.

Contact your local branch to:

- join information and support sessions
- share your story
- ask questions.

**If you would like to help people living with heart disease,  
please consider donating.**

To donate:

Visit: [heartfoundation.org.nz/donate](http://heartfoundation.org.nz/donate)

Phone: 0800 830 100

Heart Foundation, PO Box 17160, Greenlane, Auckland 1546  
T 09 571 9191 F 09 571 9190 E [info@heartfoundation.org.nz](mailto:info@heartfoundation.org.nz)

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