



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HEART

Obesity has become an epidemic in this country and is causing an increase in the occurrence of many chronic health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. Lifestyle changes — including food choices and exercise — are often the first step to alleviating these issues.

To decrease your chances of heart-related issues, reduce your sodium and saturated fat intake and eat heart-healthy foods. Choose your foods wisely and maintain a healthy weight. Make your meals “heart healthy” by ensuring each meal contains moderate amounts of sodium, cholesterol, and fats.

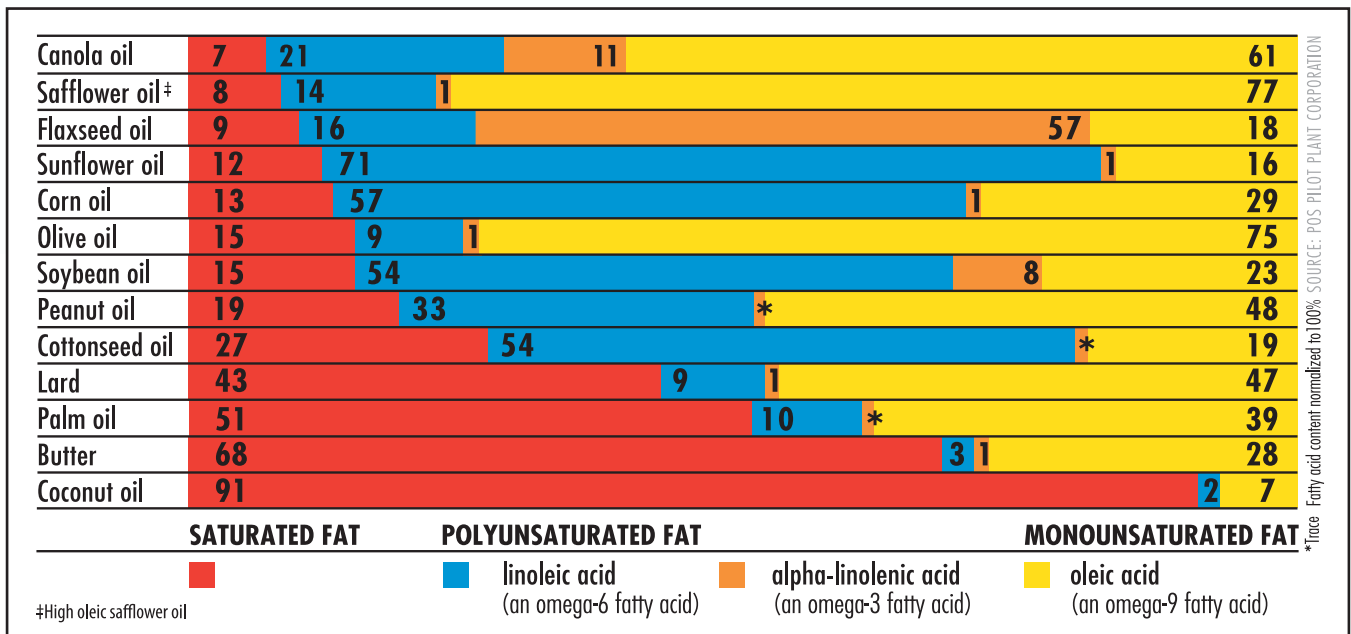
Fats, carbohydrates, and proteins are the source of calories in your diet. Fat provides the most concentrated form of calories per gram weight (9 calories per 1 gram of fat), so the calories in foods high in fat can add up quickly.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that can be obtained in two ways. Your body produces it, and it can be obtained from your diet. Some cholesterol is necessary for healthy bodily functions. Cholesterol is also found in animal products like meat, milk, eggs, cheese, and organ meats. Keeping your cholesterol dietary intake low is important to prevent heart disease. Sometimes your body can make too much or extra cholesterol from food, and this can lead to deposits in the arteries and heart attack.

High amounts of sodium in your diet can increase your risk of high blood pressure. High blood pressure (or hypertension) is called the “silent killer” and can lead to stroke or heart disease as well. Many people with high blood pressure have it and don’t even know it. Although salt is a source of sodium in our diet, Americans consume more sodium from processed and pre-packaged foods than from table salt. Choose packaged foods that are low in sodium.

Not All Fats Are Created Equal!

Good fats are unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature and can help prevent heart disease if eaten as part of an overall healthy diet. Olive oil, canola oil, and the fats found in fish and nuts are a few examples of good sources of these beneficial fats. When choosing fats, choose good fats.



Bad fats are saturated fats. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature and may block your arteries and lead to heart disease. Butter, lard, and the fats found in meat and poultry can be “heart breaking” when eaten in large quantities.

Trans fats are bad fats too. Trans fats are fats chemically altered to make them solid at room temperature, and they are bad for your heart. Margarines, processed snacks, and some baked goods tend to have trans fats. Be aware that labels that read “0 trans-fat per serving” provide between 0g and 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Look for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats in the ingredient list to decipher whether a product is *really* trans-fat free.

Take Care of Your Heart

So what can we do to decrease our risk of heart disease and hypertension (high blood pressure)? Always check with your healthcare provider about your personal risk level. Look for these Keys to Better Health™ attribute icons when shopping to help you make smart, heart-healthy choices!

- **Heart Health** — foods with the Heart Health key means it is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and is limited in sodium.
- **Low Saturated Fat** — foods with this icon are low in saturated fat, have 1 gram or less of saturated fat, and no more than 3 grams of total fat.
- **Low Cholesterol** — foods high in cholesterol can increase artery clogging “bad” cholesterol, known as LDL, in the blood. Choose foods with this icon, which means they contain no more than 20 mg of cholesterol and 2 grams of total fat per serving.
- **Low Sodium or Sodium Free** — Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 recommends that a daily sodium intake should be limited to 2300 mg (approximately 1 tsp. of salt per day) and no more than 1500 mg per day for those who are 51 years of age or older; are African Americans; and for those with issues like kidney disease, hypertension, or diabetes. Foods with the Low Sodium icon will have no more than 140mg of sodium per serving, and foods with the Sodium Free icon will have less than 35mg of sodium per serving.

You hold the keys to a message from your heart. And now it’s your turn to make good food choices and help spread this message to those close to your heart!

For more information on how to keep your heart healthy and recipes for heart-healthy meals, check out the American Heart Association’s website at www.heart.org.

