



10 Step Heart Challenge



For some tips on how to lower cholesterol and support heart health follow our 10 step heart challenge.



Step 1.



Step 2.



Step 3.



Step 4.



Step 5.



Step 6.



Step 7.



Step 8.



Step 9.



Step 10.

Step 1- Weigh in

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for your overall health and particularly your heart health. Regular exercise and a healthy diet can help you maintain a healthy weight. It really can be as simple as balancing the 'energy in' with the 'energy out'.

Your weight can be checked by measuring either your body mass index (BMI) or your waist circumference:

➤ Body mass index is calculated by dividing your weight in kilograms by your height in meters squared (kg/m^2). A BMI of 20 - 25 kg/m^2 is considered a healthy weight.

➤ More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on a person's waist circumference. Waist circumference is a useful tool for assessing fat carried around your stomach and abdomen, and is usually used in conjunction with BMI. Fat around the abdomen or stomach can be particularly bad for your long term health.

Step 2- Positive choices: fruit, vegetables, antioxidants, fibre and more

Try to eat a variety of nutritious foods in your diet every day. Think about the foods you choose. It's all about swinging the balance to more healthy nutritious foods and saving treats for special occasions. Eating the right foods can improve your health, now and in the future.

Choose lots of vegetables, fruits and legumes (dried peas, dried beans and lentils) and grain based foods such as whole grain or wholemeal bread, pasta, rice, noodles and grains. These can provide lots of fibre and beneficial antioxidants.

Nutrition experts recommend adults should eat between 25-30 grams of fibre per day¹. Soluble fibres such as that found in cereals including oats and barley, fruit and legumes can help manage cholesterol.

Antioxidants are found in fruits, vegetables, red wine and tea and may reduce free radicals in the body. Free radicals can oxidise LDL cholesterol, and have negative impact on your heart health².



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Step 3- Fat Facts

Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated, and also monounsaturated fats, has been shown to be beneficial to the heart and cholesterol levels ^{3,4}.

Polyunsaturated fats include soybean and sunflower oil, as well as grains, nuts and seeds. Also try to include omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids found in fatty fish and plants, such as linseed (or flaxseed).

Monounsaturated fats include nuts, and canola and olive oil.

Choose lean meats and reduced or low fat dairy foods, to help keep levels of saturated fat down.

Step 5- Find some fish

The Heart Foundation recommends that Australian adults consume about 500 milligrams of omega-3 polyunsaturated fats (marine source) every day⁶. This can be achieved by eating two to three; 150 gram serves of oily fish every week or by supplementing your intake with fish oil supplements (capsules or oil) and omega-3 enriched food and drinks. Fish rich in omega-3 include Atlantic and Australian salmon, blue trevally, blue mackerel, gemfish, canned sardines, canned salmon and some varieties of canned tuna. Other fish, such as barramundi, bream and flathead, and seafood, such as squid, scallops and mussels, are also good sources of marine-based omega-3.

Step 4- Get moving

Try to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most; preferably all days of the week, this can be accumulated across your day or in one bout of 30 minutes⁵.

If you have not been exercising regularly start gently and build up. Try to increase your incidental (or everyday) activity. This may be by taking the stairs instead of the lift, walking to get the milk or paper instead of driving. Combine this with some regular planned exercise. Choose an exercise that suits you and which you enjoy, it may be walking the dog, a hit of golf, dancing, gardening, cycling or pilates. Simply get your body moving and your heart pumping faster and you will be on your way to fitness!

Step 6- Alcohol

Drink alcohol in moderation. There is no harm in the occasional celebratory drink but remember it is empty calories and in excess is generally harmful to your health. The Heart Foundation's tip for healthy eating and drinking recommends no more than two standard drinks per day if you drink alcohol⁷.



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Step 7- Quit

Cigarette smoking is not only bad for your heart health but can cause many other health problems. If you need help call the Quit-line on 131 848 or talk to your doctor.

Step 8- Shake the salt

It is important to cut back not just on the salt you add to food but also to that added already to foods you buy, particularly snack and take away foods. Approximately, 75% of our salt intake comes from processed food⁸. Where possible, pick reduced salt varieties.

Step 9- Add some plant sterols

An additional option to help your heart is to consume foods that contain plant sterols. Research shows that consuming plant sterols every day in milk can lower cholesterol (LDL) by an average of 10%, in just 3 weeks⁸. HeartActive® is a low fat milk enriched with plant sterols. Enjoy 2-3 serves (250mL) of HeartActive® for the best results - try it on cereal, in your morning coffee or in a delicious fruit smoothie.

Step 10- Keep a check on it!

There are lots of factors that affect your heart health. Staying fit and healthy is a great start but keeping a check on the risk factors you cannot see, like your cholesterol and blood pressure can save your life! Make sure you see your doctor regularly and ask them to check for you.

¹ NHMRC (2006). Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand.

² Hamilton (1997). Pharmacol. Therapeut; 53: 409-16.

³ WHO (2003). Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases.

⁴ Heart Foundation, (2009). Position statement dietary fats and dietary sterols for cardiovascular health.

⁵ NHMRC (2005) National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults.

⁶ Heart Foundation (2009) Position statement Dietary fats and dietary sterols for cardiovascular health.

⁷ Heart Foundation (2009) Healthy eating and drinking

⁸ Heart Foundation (2008) www.heartfoundation.org.au

⁹ Clifton (2004) EJCN 58. 503 – 509.

Taken from www.heartactive.com.au

* Research shows that consuming plant sterols every day in milk can lower LDL cholesterol by an average of 10%, in three weeks. Result may vary depending on personal circumstances.

Available at:

