

# Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes to Lower Cholesterol

## To promote heart health, you should:

- Adopt healthy eating habits that include foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and cholesterol.
- Lose weight if you are overweight or obese.
- Increase physical activity. Talk to your healthcare provider to make an appropriate plan for you. Try for 30-60 minutes of exercise each day.
- Cut out smoking/tobacco products. If it is hard to quit on your own, ask for help. All VA Medical Centers have programs to help veterans quit smoking.

Food Group	Best Choices
<p><b>Grains</b></p> <p>Choose at least 6 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 slice bread</li> <li>- 1-ounce dry cereal</li> <li>- 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% whole grain breads, rolls, buns, bagels, pita breads and English muffins.</li> <li>• Whole grain soft tortillas, rice cakes, breadsticks</li> <li>• Steel cut oatmeal, dry whole oat cereals</li> <li>• Brown rice and whole grain pasta</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b> Choose more whole grain foods. The words “whole” or “bran” should be listed first on the ingredient label. Look for 100% whole grain.</p>
<p><b>Vegetables</b></p> <p>Choose 3 to 5 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables</li> <li>- 1/2 cup cooked or chopped raw vegetables</li> <li>- 3/4 cup vegetable juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh, frozen and low-sodium canned vegetables</li> <li>• Vegetables steamed or sautéed in canola or olive oil, low-sodium vegetable juice and low-sodium vegetable or clear broth soups</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Fruits</b></p> <p>Choose 2 to 4 servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 piece of fresh fruit</li> <li>- 1/2 cup canned fruit</li> <li>- 1/4 cup dried fruit</li> <li>- 3/4 cup fruit juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or frozen fruit, dried fruit without added sugar and canned fruit in natural juice</li> <li>• Choose whole fruit instead of juice to get more fiber.</li> <li>• Fruit is a good choice for a snack or dessert</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dairy Products</b></p> <p>Choose 2 to 3 low-fat or fat-free servings each day. A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 cup milk</li> <li>- 1 cup yogurt</li> <li>- 1 1/2 -2 ounces cheese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fat-free and 1% milk</li> <li>• Yogurt, cheese, or buttermilk made with skim or 1% milk, cheese made with 3 grams of fat per ounce</li> <li>• Fat-free cream cheese and sour cream</li> <li>• Unsweetened soymilk, rice milk, oat milk, or almond milk</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meat and Meat Substitutes</b></p> <p>Limit meat to no more than 5 ounces each day.</p> <p>A serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3-ounce meat, fish, poultry</li> <li>- 1/2 cup beans, peas, lentils</li> <li>- 2 egg whites</li> </ul> <p>A 3-ounce portion of cooked meat is about the size of a deck of cards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground beef &gt;90% lean, round and loin cuts of beef</li> <li>• Skinless white meat chicken and turkey (not deep-fried)</li> <li>• Canadian bacon</li> <li>• Salmon, tuna (in water), sardines, mackerel, and herring</li> <li>• Imitation “meat” made from soy, egg whites or egg substitutes</li> <li>• Veal, loin and leg cuts of pork and lamb, wild game like venison and elk</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fats, Oils and Sweets</b></p> <p>Choose margarines with liquid vegetable oil listed before hydrogenated oil on the ingredient list.</p> <p>Limit intake of sweets and snacks, especially if you are overweight. A dessert labeled fat-free can still have calories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canola, olive, avocado, or flaxseed oil</li> <li>• Vegetable cooking sprays</li> <li>• Margarines that help lower cholesterol</li> <li>• Nuts, seeds, avocados, olives, and natural peanut butter</li> <li>• Low-fat gravy (powder mixes or jars)</li> <li>• Sugar-free gelatin, fat-free/sugar-free pudding</li> </ul>