

Step-by-Step Guide: Dietary Advice for Managing Cholesterol

1 ASSESSING the patient's readiness for dietary advice

"Did you know that improving your diet can help improve your cholesterol levels? Would you like to discuss this further?"

No

Yes

Continue to next step

"I understand this and when you feel you're ready to make changes here's a diet quiz you can use to help you get started."

HEART UK Diet Quiz



2 ASK about their diet

"I am going to ask you a few questions about your diet to help us focus on which changes you could make"

Thinking about the last month...		How often?		
Q1	Do you eat red meat (beef, lamb, pork, goat and venison)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than 4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 times a week or more
	Do you eat processed meat e.g., sausages, bacon, ham, sausage rolls, pies and salami?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than once a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Once a week or more
Q2	Do you eat dairy milk and yogurts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, USUALLY choose low-fat	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, USUALLY choose full-fat
	Do you eat cheese?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than four times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Four times a week or more
Q3	Do you eat butter, ghee, other animal fat, palm or coconut oil?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a day	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Q4	Do you have fast food, take-aways or ready meals?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than twice a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Twice a week or more
Q5	Do you eat savoury snacks? (crisps, salted/honeyed nuts, pork scratchings, pies and sausage rolls, beef jerky etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than twice a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Twice a week or more
Q6	Do you eat sweet snacks and puddings? (biscuits, cakes, buns, chocolate, sweets, yogurt/chocolate coated nuts or dried fruit, all types of puddings)	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> LESS than twice a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Twice a week or more
Q7	How many portions (handfuls) of fruit and vegetables do you eat a day?	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 5-a-day	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-a-day	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5-a-day
Q8	Do you eat foods with added plant stanols or sterols (yogurts, spreads, drinks)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes		<input type="checkbox"/> No

3 ADVISE & COLLABORATE

ARE ALL THE ANSWERS GREEN?

No Yes

Scan for more advice and support



A. HEART UK Diet Quiz B. HEART UK Healthy Living

1) Congratulate the patient on all the **GREEN** responses

"Well done, you're already making positive dietary changes. For example, (give specific green ticked examples). Keep up the good work!"

2) Review with the patient all **RED** (right hand column) responses and highlight these as a priority to change.

"From your answers, there are a few areas where changes could help improve your cholesterol levels. Would you like to go over these areas and discuss potential improvements to your diet?" (give examples)

3) Use the information on the reverse side to guide the patient in improving their **RED** responses. Help them choose specific changes to focus on, and ask them to select just 1-2 improvements they would like to tackle.

"To make progress, it's best to focus on one or two changes at a time. Which of these changes do you feel confident about starting this week?"

4 AGREE & CONFIRM

"Given the options we've discussed, what steps will you take to make these changes happen?"

- Agree an action plan and write down the 1-2 changes the patient has agreed to, along with the plan on how to make this happen e.g., specific food swaps they have chosen
- Emphasise small steps, and to gradually build on these, to make sustainable changes

5 FOLLOW-UP PLAN

Book a follow up appointment **OR** signpost if they want to find out more, or for more improvements.

HEART UK Diet Quizzes



HEART UK Healthy Eating Booklet



HEART UK Healthy Eating in Practice



Making Improvements

Focus on the 1-2 areas the patient is most keen to tackle first. Discuss the various swap options available and allow them to identify which specific swaps they would like to try.

	Switch from...	...to this...
	Foods high in saturated fats which can raise cholesterol...	...to foods low in saturated fat¹ and/or high in unsaturated fats which help lower blood cholesterol²
Q1	Red & processed meat and other fatty meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red meat less than four times a week. A portion is the size of your palm or a deck of cards • Avoid processed meat e.g. sausages, tinned meat, salamis etc. • Choose leaner cuts of meat. E.g., 5% fat mince, poultry (chicken, turkey, duck) without skin, remove all visible (white) fat from meat • Replace some or all the meat in recipes with beans, lentils, soya mince/chunks, plain Quorn (mince, pieces, fillets), vegetables e.g., veg chilli, chickpea curry, lentil Bolognese • Eat fish at least twice a week, one of which should be oily (mackerel, sardines, salmon, herring, kippers) • Go meat-free at least two days a week e.g. veg chilli, chickpea burger, tofu stir fry, baked fish, lentil and mushroom Bolognese
Q2	Full fat dairy foods: milk, yogurt, cream & plant-based coconut alternatives Cheese. Hard and semi-hard cheeses are also very high in salt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always choose low fat or fat-free milk (semi-skimmed, 1% fat or skimmed) and low-fat/diet yogurts (<3g fat/100g) OR choose unsweetened and fortified plant-based alternatives except for coconut! • Limit cream to special occasions - replace with 0% fat crème fraîche, or use low fat yogurt • Choose low fat cottage or Quark cheese - you can have these daily • Limit hard and semi-hard cheeses even those labelled 'reduced fat': try and have less than four times a week - keep to 30g (2-thumb-widths) portion.
Q3	Butter, ghee, other animal fat (e.g., lard) & palm or coconut oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose vegetable, nut or seed oils and spreads made with these e.g., olive, rapeseed, sunflower, safflower, peanut. Use in moderation • Choose cooking methods that do not require added fats e.g., boiling, baking, grilling, poaching, roasting bags
	Foods high in saturated fats, salt and/or sugars...	to foods low in saturated fat, salt and/or sugars...
Q4	Fast food, take-aways or ready meals. Creamy curries, meat & stuffed crusty pizzas, pastry pies, fatty sandwiches (e.g., with dressings, mayo, cheese, meat), cheese based pastas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards having less than twice a week. Gradually cut down, by adding an extra day without them • For ready meals, choose those that are green for saturated fat, salt and sugar and keep to the recommended serving • Smaller portions & add vegetables and/or beans • Tomato based or dry curries • Plain margherita pizza with extra veg on top & add a side salad • Potato topped pies • Sandwiches with salad plus a lean protein e.g., fish, egg, falafel, hummus, chicken or turkey (no skin), skip the mayo • Tomato based pastas • Sushi is an excellent low fat option
Q5	Savoury snacks. Crisps, or salted, honeyed or yogurt coated nuts, pork scratchings, pies and sausage rolls, beef jerky, salty savoury snacks, chips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A handful of unsweetened/unsalted nuts (25-30g) • Unsweetened/unsalted popped corn • Oat crackers with peanut butter • Veg sticks/oat cakes with low fat hummus or tomato salsa or low fat yogurt & mint • Baked potato wedges with vegetable or seed oil (not coconut)
Q6	Sweet snacks. Biscuits, cakes, pastries, sweet, chocolate, desserts, puddings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, tinned, frozen or dried fruit with low fat yogurt • Small handful nuts (25-30g) • Small bowl wholegrain breakfast cereal with low fat milk • 2 plain biscuits e.g., rich tea or garibaldi • Currant/hot cross bun, tea cake, wholemeal fruit scone
	Other foods that help manage cholesterol...	
Q7	Not achieving 5-a-day³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include fruit and/or veg with each meal and snack: fresh, frozen, canned, dried • Breakfast: a small banana or handful frozen berries with cereal/porridge • Lunch: salad in sandwiches/wraps, side salad, bean and veg soups • Dinner: always add salad and/or at least two cooked veg
Q8	Not taking foods fortified with plant stanol esters or sterols⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include daily food with added plant stanols or sterols e.g. spread (3 x 10g servings) OR ONE mini drink WITH a meal OR ONE yogurt for example as a pudding

Adapted from the HEART UK Diet Quiz



 Watch our short video for a quick walkthrough on using this guide effectively.



1. Reducing consumption of saturated fat, as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, contributes to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels.
2. Replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats, as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, has been shown to lower blood cholesterol.
3. Consuming at least five daily portions of fruits and vegetables, including carrots, sweet potatoes, apples, berries, and citrus fruits, provides a specific fibre called pectin. A daily intake of 6g of pectin as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle helps maintain normal blood cholesterol levels.
4. Plant sterols and plant stanol esters, as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, have been shown to lower blood cholesterol. The beneficial effect is obtained with a daily intake of 1.5g-3g plant sterols/stanols. Reference to the magnitude of the effect may only be made for foods.

This document is not intended to replace medical advice.

