

## How to make your meals healthier choices

Healthy choices are those which are lower in total fat, saturated fat, sodium, and calories and higher in fibre. Changes to a recipe don't have to be dramatic. They may involve reducing, eliminating or adding ingredients, using healthier alternatives, altering portions sizes or using healthier cooking methods.

### How to reduce total or saturated fat content



Saturated and trans fats are linked to an increased risk of Cardiovascular disease. They are mostly found in animal based products such as lard, cream, butter, ghee, shortening, pastry, processed meats, cheese and also palm oil or coconut oil/cream.

The following ingredients could be reduced in a recipe or you could try some healthier replacements:

High fat/ saturated fat Ingredient	Example	Healthy alternative
Butter	Quiche or pastry bases, sauces, baking, or as a spread	Canola, sunflower or olive oil margarine
Fatty meats such as salami or bacon	Pizza, risotto, sauces, toppings	Low fat ham or pastrami
Full fat yoghurt, milk and cream	Creamy sauces, breakfast options, in baking	Low/ no fat dairy/milk or condensed milk
Full fat cheese	Cheese sauces, pizza, sandwich fillings	Low fat cheese, ricotta or cottage cheese
Puff/short crust pastry	Pies, desserts	Filo pastry brushed with egg wash

Healthier cooking methods can reduce the amount of fat in a dish. Instead of deep frying, try baking, grilling, steaming or microwaving. Crumbed items can be cooked in the oven.

## How to increase fibre content

Fibre is found in wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables. Fibre is essential for proper functioning of the gut. Adequate fibre of 25-30g per day is related to a reduced risk of heart disease, certain cancers and diabetes.

The fibre content of meals can be increased using the following strategies:

- Use wholemeal flour and wholemeal/ grain breads alternatives.
- Increase the amount of legumes, vegetables or fruit used. These can be used to replace a portion of meat or as a side.



## How to reduce sodium content



High blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, is associated with high intake of sodium.

Sodium is high in smoked and processed meats, oysters/ mussels, cheese, canned food, stocks, sauces and seasonings. Foods naturally low in sodium are fresh fruits and vegetables, milk and yoghurt, raw nuts and seeds, fresh meat and unprocessed grains.

Reduce the sodium content by reducing or omitting salt in recipes. Try using more herbs and spices for extra flavour. Use more fresh produce and reduce the quantity of high salt processed ingredients.

## How to reduce calorie content



The portion size of a meal is a main contributor to large calorie contents of meals. Reducing portions can help reduce waste and keep the calorie content at a reasonable level. Fat is the most energy dense nutrient. A dish which is lower in fat will have a lower calorie content without having to alter the serving size.