

## Cooking tips to help lower your cholesterol

**C**holesterol comes from two sources: your body and the foods you eat. As the amount of cholesterol in your blood rises, so does your risk of heart disease. If too much low-density lipoprotein—also known as LDL, or “bad”—cholesterol circulates in your blood, it can slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that supply blood to your heart and brain. Together with other substances, it can form plaque, which is a thick, hard deposit that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. This condition is known as atherosclerosis. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, you can have a heart attack or stroke.

One of the best ways to improve heart health is to try and eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. Because the cholesterol that comes from food is only found in animal products such as meat, butter, margarine and eggs, limiting these foods in your diet can really help.

It's surprisingly simple to avoid excess cholesterol while cooking. Just follow these tips:

**Reduce the meat in your meals.** Try eating a completely meat-free meal, such as eggplant lasagna, a lentil and bean salad or a big grilled portobello mushroom on a bun instead of a burger. If you really don't want to skip meat completely, think of it as a condiment instead of a main ingredient. Use small amounts in casseroles, stews, soups and spaghetti for flavor.

**Ditch the bad fats.** Avoid solid fats such as butter, lard or shortening when cooking. Instead, use small amounts of canola, safflower, soybean or olive oil to pan-fry fish and poultry or sauté vegetables. Say no to creamy fat-laden dressings and sprinkle olive oil and vinegar on your salad instead. Substitute low-fat or nonfat yogurt for sour cream in dressings and dips.

**Substitute egg whites for whole eggs.** The yolk of an egg is where all the cholesterol is, so egg whites are a good source of heart-healthy protein without the cholesterol. When

you come across a recipe that calls for eggs, use egg whites or a cholesterol-free egg substitute instead. Replace each whole egg with two egg whites and you won't even notice the difference!

**Go fishing.** Try to eat seafood at least twice a week. Prepare fish baked, grilled or broiled instead of battered and fried. Shrimp and crawfish have more cholesterol than most other types of seafood, so choose your fish wisely.



**Switch to low-fat or fat-free dairy products.** Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk can be used in place of whole milk and half-and-half. Try low-fat cottage cheese, part-skim milk mozzarella or ricotta, or other low-fat cheeses instead of your regular full-fat cheese.

**Spice it up!** Don't rely on butter or sour cream to add flavor to dishes. Break out the spice rack and add oregano, basil, parsley, thyme, dill, cilantro, cumin, rosemary—the choices are endless!—to add a burst of fresh flavor without the fat and cholesterol.

Cooking low-cholesterol meals can be fun if you get the whole family involved. For more than 200 easy-to-prepare heart-healthy meals, check out the American Heart Association's *Low-Fat, Low Cholesterol Cookbook*, available at your local bookstore or on amazon.com.

# Recognizing roadblocks to losing weight



**L**osing weight—and keeping it off—can be a challenge, with temptations lurking around every corner. Recognizing the roadblocks that can keep you from losing or maintaining weight can help you deal with them as soon as you run into them so you don't veer too far off course.

**Roadblock #1: You get hungry between meals and head straight for the candy machine.** Keeping healthy, low-calorie snacks with you can help you avoid reaching for that chocolate bar. Having baby carrots, celery sticks, fruit or low-fat yogurt on hand can deter you from a trip to the candy machine.

**Roadblock #2: You go to a buffet and can't control how much you eat.** If you can't avoid the buffet, take a minute to remember how hard you've been working to lose weight. Don't fill your entire plate; instead, put a small portion on the plate and don't go back for seconds. Focus on the people you're eating with instead of the food.

**Roadblock #3: After a long day, you just don't feel like cooking and grab fast food on the way home.** Planning your meals on the weekend for the upcoming week can help. Cook meals, divide them into single-serve portions and freeze them, so all you have to do when you get home is heat it up and add some finishing touches.

**Roadblock #4: You can't stop craving sweets and salty foods.** When you feel one of these cravings coming on, drink a tall glass of water. This helps your stomach feel full and the craving should pass.

**Roadblock #5: You just love dessert too much to give it up.** You don't have to give up your favorite desserts completely! When you get the hankering for something sweet, eat a small bite or two, savoring each bite. Then forget about

it. Resisting the temptation may just make you give in and eat way too much. If you don't think you can eat a small amount, don't eat any at all.

**Roadblock #6: You hate working out and think it's boring.** Working out doesn't have to mean endless hours on the treadmill. Find physical activities that you enjoy. Team up with an exercise buddy to keep you motivated or sign up for a class.

These roadblocks don't have to mean the end of your weight loss success. Knowing what they are—and being prepared to deal with them—can help you stay on track to a healthy weight.

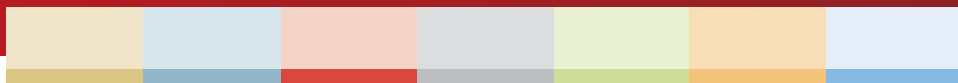
## Life's Simple 7 in a Nutshell

Cardiovascular health encompasses two basic components: ideal health behaviors, and ideal health factors.

The behaviors include not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, meeting or exceeding AHA recommendations for physical activity and eating a healthy diet.

The health factors include blood pressure, fasting blood glucose and total cholesterol levels that are within the AHA's recommended range—preferably without needing medication to keep them there.

Modest lifestyle or behavioral changes can move you in the right direction. And those who make behavioral changes before developing any serious health risks can look forward to a better quality of life and moving toward excellent heart health.



## Do you live in a “food desert”?

**D**epending on where you live, you may have never heard of a “food desert”—or you may know all too well what one is. If you don’t know, a food desert is a city neighborhood or small town without easy access to healthy, fresh, affordable food. There are no grocery stores or supermarkets, just convenience stores and fast-food restaurants that provide few healthy choices. Living in a food desert can contribute to a poor diet, weight gain, diabetes and heart disease. More than 23 million Americans live in areas where the closest supermarket is more than one mile from their homes. If transportation isn’t available, most of them can’t get the healthy food they need.

to healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, seafood and lean meats. The Initiative also provides community outreach to help residents choose more nutritious foods once these stores are built or renovated and looks at strategies to provide transportation in these communities so residents can get to where the healthy food is. To learn more about what you can do to help, visit [yourethecure.org](http://yourethecure.org).

The primary goal of Let’s Move! is to end childhood obesity, and they’re taking on food deserts to offer kids healthy choices that their families can afford. The group provides grants to help communities build new grocery stores, renovate existing ones,

plant community gardens and bring in fresh produce trucks or farmer’s markets. Their goal is to get rid of food deserts in the United States by 2020. To learn more, visit [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov).

If you live in a food desert, get together with other people in your neighborhood and talk to convenience store owners. See if they can stock more healthy foods, like fresh fruit and vegetables, lean meats and low-fat dairy. If the store owners see a group of people who are interested buying healthy foods, they may add them to their inventory. Contact community leaders to make sure they’re involved. Talk to neighbors who have transportation and see if you can arrange group trips to the supermarket that’s a few

miles away. And if you do turn to fast-food restaurants, make healthy choices: grilled instead of fried, baked potatoes or salads instead of French fries and drink water instead of soda or juice. Hopefully these food deserts will eventually dry up and all Americans will have easy access to the healthy foods they need.



The American Heart Association and First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! are trying to revitalize neighborhoods by getting rid of these food deserts. The AHA supports the government’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which is working to bring full-service grocery stores or supermarkets to rural and urban communities so residents can have access



## Walking: Are you doing it right?

One of the easiest, least expensive ways to exercise is walking—you can do it almost anywhere, at any time and at any age. And it's a fantastic way to reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, improve your blood pressure, lose weight and enhance your mental well-being.

Even though we've been walking since we were toddlers, by the time we became adults we may have picked up some bad habits that can prevent us from



getting the most benefit from walking and maybe even lead to injury. Review these proper walking techniques to see if you're doing it right—and make some adjustments if you're not. Your body will thank you!

**As you're walking, check your feet.** Step forward, landing on your heel, then roll forward on the ball of your foot. Raise your heel and push off with your big toe. All of this should be done as one smooth movement.

**Be aware of your posture.** Hold your head high, aligned with your back and spine, and focus your eyes 15 to 20 feet in front of you. Keep your chin parallel to the ground. Gently tighten your stomach muscles and swing your arms in a natural motion, with your elbows bent at a right angle. Keep your elbows close to your side. Make sure your feet are parallel to each other, if possible, a shoulder width apart.

**Try not to lean forward when you start walking up an incline or hill.** This can put a lot of strain on your back. Keep your posture as upright as possible.

Got it? You're ready—put one foot (properly) in front of the other and start walking! For more walking tips, visit [startwalkingnow.org](http://startwalkingnow.org).



## Helping kids make healthy choices at school

Burgers, fries, hot dogs, mac and cheese—these school cafeteria favorites seem to always be on the menu. If you can't send your little ones off to school with a healthy homemade lunch, provide them with guidance on making healthy choices as they're moving through the lunch line.

The best way to teach kids about eating healthy at school is to serve healthy meals and snacks at home. This sets the foundation of healthy eating that will move with them as they go to school.

Many schools now offer healthier choices, adding vegetarian entrees, salad and fruit bars, and ethnic food options. If the school provides a lunch menu ahead of time, sit down with your child and go over it, picking out the healthy foods that he or she should choose each day. Tell kids to choose fruits and vegetables instead of fries or chips and to ask for grilled meat instead of fried. When they grab for a drink, they should choose water or fat-free (skim) milk instead of soda or juice. Peer pressure can be great, and some kids may grab that hot dog because their classmates are doing it. Remind kids that although it may be hard to make the right choices, it will help them keep their bodies healthy and they'll feel much better.



## Resources

### Life's Simple 7® Assessments

To understand the steps you may need to take to improve heart health and quality of life, visit [heart.org/mylifecheck](http://heart.org/mylifecheck)

### Let's Move!

To learn more about the First Lady's initiative to end childhood obesity, visit [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov)

### Get physically active

For ideas on how to incorporate physical activity into your life, visit [startwalkingnow.org](http://startwalkingnow.org)

### Get involved!

To find out how you can join the AHA's movement in support of healthier communities, visit [yourethecure.org](http://yourethecure.org)