Cholesterol and saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol and make heart disease worse. Chicken and fish have less saturated fat than most red meat.

Why are chicken, fish and beans better to eat than red meat?

In general, red meats (beef, pork and lamb) have more cholesterol and saturated (bad) fat than chicken, fish and vegetable proteins such as beans. Cholesterol and saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol and make heart disease worse. Chicken and fish have less saturated fat than most red meat. The unsaturated fats in fish, such as salmon, actually have health benefits. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and some plant sources, may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Beans don’t contain cholesterol, only animal products do. There are many types of beans – pinto, kidney, garbanzo, soybeans, etc. – and they’re all good for you. Put lentils, split peas and black-eyed peas on the list, too! None of them have cholesterol unless they’re prepared with meat (such as pork and beans) or with lard (such as refried beans).

Tips for People Who Like Meat

It’s OK to eat red meat as long as you limit the amount. The American Heart Association recommends that people limit lean meat, skinless chicken and fish to less than six ounces per day, total. Fish (3.5 oz./serving) should be eaten at least twice per week, preferably fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout and herring.

Use the tips below to lower the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you get when you eat meat.
• One portion of meat is about the size of a deck of cards or three ounces.
• Choose lean cuts of meat. Lean cuts usually contain the words “round,” “loin” or “sirloin” on the package.
• Trim off as much fat as you can before cooking, and pour off the melted fat after cooking.
• Use healthier cooking methods: bake, broil, stew and grill.

*Note:* Eating a lot of meat is not a healthy way to lose weight, especially if you have heart disease.

### How to Use More Chicken, Fish and Beans

#### Breakfast
- Sprinkle chopped, unsalted almonds, peanuts or walnuts on your oatmeal or cereal.
- Make scrambled eggs or omelets using 1 egg yolk for every 2 egg whites, or use cholesterol-free egg substitutes.
- Prepare soy-protein meat substitutes (low-sodium) for bacon and sausage.

#### Lunch
- Slice up leftover chicken for sandwiches.
- Have a bowl of low sodium bean or lentil soup.
- Eat a tuna sandwich (with just a little low-fat mayonnaise or skip the mayo and mix tuna with a ripe avocado).
- Make a chef’s salad with leftover chicken, low-fat, low sodium cheese and hard-boiled egg whites.
- Have a seafood salad.

#### Dinner
- Grill, bake or microwave chicken breasts. Remove skin before cooking.
• Sprinkle fish fillets with low-fat Italian dressing, and bake them.
• Wrap a whole fish in foil with lemon and onion slices; then bake or grill.
• Add beans, unsalted nuts or low-fat, low sodium cheese to your salad.
• Make low sodium bean soup or a casserole.
• Make black bean burgers or garbanzo bean burgers from scratch.

Many people choose not to eat meat for religious reasons or because of other concerns, including health. You can get all the nutrients your body needs without eating meat. For people who don’t want to eat meat (or much meat), there are many healthy ways to get enough protein.

AHA Recommendation

• Choose fish, shellfish, poultry without the skin, and trimmed lean meats, no more than 6 ounces, cooked, per day.
• Enjoy at least 2 servings of baked or grilled fish each week, especially oily fish.
• Choose seasonings with no or lower amounts of salt and sodium and fat such as spices, herbs and other flavorings in cooking and at the table.
• Select meat substitutes such as dried beans, peas, lentils or tofu (soybean curd) in entrees, salads or soups.

Choose from

• Fish and shellfish. Shrimp and crayfish are higher in cholesterol than most types of fish, but lower in saturated fat and total fat than most meats and poultry.
• Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon. Some types of fish may contain high levels of mercury, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), dioxins and other environmental contaminants. Shark, swordfish, tilefish (golden bass or golden snapper) and king mackerel are examples. Women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or nursing — and young children — should avoid eating potentially contaminated fish.
• Chicken and turkey (without skin); ground turkey.
• Lean beef (round, sirloin, chuck, loin). Buy "choice" or "select" grades of beef rather than "prime."
• Lean or extra lean ground beef (no more than 15% fat).
• Lean veal (except commercially ground).
• Lean ham, lean pork (tenderloin, loin chop). Ham and Canadian bacon are higher in sodium (salt) than other meats.
• Lean lamb (leg, arm, loin).
• Lean cuts of emu, buffalo and ostrich. These are very low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.
• Wild game (rabbit, pheasant, venison, wild duck without skin). These usually have less fat than animals raised for market (duck, goose).
• Processed sandwich meats (low-fat turkey, chicken, turkey ham, turkey pastrami or lean boiled ham). Check the amount of sodium; some have 25% or more of the daily value.

Shopping and preparation tips

1. A 3-ounce cooked portion is about the size of a deck of cards. To help you judge serving sizes, a 3-ounce portion equals:
   • 1/2 of a chicken breast or a chicken leg with thigh (without skin)
   • 3/4 cup of flaked fish
   • 2 thin slices of lean roast beef (each slice 3" x 3" x 1/4")

2. Choose cuts of meat that have the least amount of visible fat and trim this visible fat off of meats. Buy "choice" or "select" grades of beef rather than "prime."

3. Instead of frying, prepare meats by baking, broiling, roasting, microwaving or stir-frying. Pour off the fat after browning.
4. Remove the skin and fat under the skin before cooking poultry pieces. (The exception is when roasting a whole chicken or turkey. Remove the skin before carving and serving the meat.) Choose whole turkeys that have not been injected with fats or broths.

5. Chill meat juices after cooking, so that you can easily skim off the hardened fat. Then you can add the juices to stews, soups and gravy.

6. Look for frozen dinners and entries that are low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.

7. A one-cup serving of cooked beans, peas or lentils, or soybean curd (tofu) can replace a 2-ounce serving of meat, poultry or fish. Two ounces of peanut butter counts as 1 ounce of meat.

8. Organ meats are very high in cholesterol. However, liver is rich in iron and vitamins. A small serving (3 ounces) is OK about once a month.

**Note:** Adults over age 50 should get vitamin B-12 from lean meat, fortified foods or vitamin supplements to meet the recommended intake of 2.4 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12 per day.

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