

The Balanced Guide to **Healthy Eating**



CRÍ

Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke



Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

Croi works to improve quality of life for all, through the prevention and control of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity. Croí is a not-for-profit foundation, dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke in the region. We are an independent organisation, totally funded through our own fundraising activities, voluntary contributions and philanthropic support.

We are at the heart of the community, working with people to make sustainable and life-changing improvements to their cardiovascular health and well-being; supporting patients and their families; teaching the lifesaving skills of CPR and providing healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills to translate best practice evidence into daily preventive care.



CROI CONNECTS

HEART & STROKE SUPPORT

091 544 310

Call Monday to Friday from 9am - 5:30pm if you have any questions about your heart health.

© Croí 2023. All Rights Reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, without prior permission.

Contents

Healthy living everyday	2
The healthy eating way to good health	3
Healthy Eating - the key to good health	4
Shopping is the first step to eating healthy	8
A guide to portion sizes	10
Mindful eating	11
Managing your weight	12
Making changes	14
Healthy meal ideas!	16
Food planner	18

Healthy Eating is all about getting the balance right and enjoying your food. This booklet shows you how to eat a variety of healthy foods that will help keep you and your heart in better shape.

Healthy living everyday

A healthy lifestyle is all about living in a way that promotes good health. These are the key elements of a healthy lifestyle:

- » **Healthy eating** - can reduce your risk of developing heart disease, stroke or diabetes. It is essential in maintaining a healthy body weight, healthy cholesterol and blood pressure levels and enhancing general well-being.
- » **Exercise** - Aim for a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week. One way of achieving this is a 30 minute brisk walk, 5 days per week. Pick an exercise you enjoy e.g. cycling, swimming, dancing and schedule it in the diary!
- » **Stop smoking** - to reduce your risk of life-threatening diseases.
- » **Look after your mental health** - take time out to relax. Learn to manage stress and seek help from a professional or someone you trust if needed.
- » **Sleep** - getting a good night's sleep can help improve mental health, regulate appetite and reduce blood pressure for better heart health.
- » **Alcohol** - The less you drink, the lower the risk of developing alcohol-related health problems. Alcohol contains calories which could lead to weight gain. Have 2-3 alcohol free days a week and keep within low risk guidelines.

The recommended weekly low-risk alcohol guidelines are:



17 standard drinks for men



11 standard drinks for women

Drinks should be spread out over the week

1 standard drink is...



One half pint of beer, stout or lager



A small glass of wine (100ml)



One Irish pub measure of spirits (35.5ml)

The healthy eating way to good health

Top tips for healthy eating!

- » Eat regularly. Research shows that people who eat breakfast regularly are more likely to keep their weight down.
- » Focus on what you can eat rather than what you can't eat.
- » Aim to cook more from scratch using fresh, less processed foods. Be open to trying new foods to add more variety to everyday meals.
- » Eat more vegetables, salad and fruit, make them part of every meal or snack.
- » Focus on fibre. Getting enough fibre helps lower our risk of heart disease, diabetes and weight gain. Fibre is found in vegetables, fruit, whole grain cereals, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.
- » Limit intake of high fat, sugar and salt snack foods such as confectionery, crisps and sugary drinks.
- » Portion size matters. Use the Food Pyramid on page 4 as a guide for serving sizes.
- » Limit the amount of added fats and oils added to foods, and in cooking.
- » Stay hydrated. Water is best as it contains no calories or added sugars, drink regularly throughout the day, aiming for 8 cups a day.
- » Be mindful of what you are eating and drinking, take time to sit and eat your meals and savour the flavour.



Healthy Eating - the key to good health

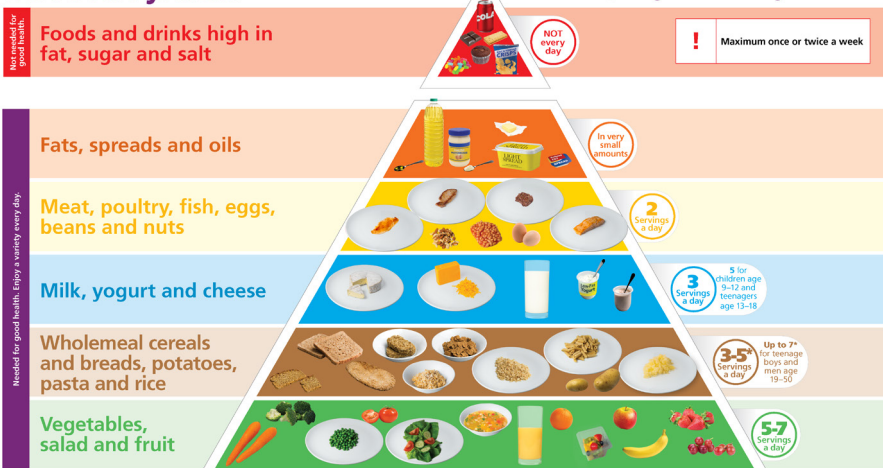
Variety is the key to healthy eating and the everyday food choices we make can make a big difference to our health in the longer term.

The Food Pyramid

The food pyramid helps you eat a wide variety of foods, in the right amount. This will help to make sure that you get all the vitamins your body needs. The healthy eating guidelines are designed to protect people at every age and stage (from five years old) against heart disease and cancer, which are the major causes of diet-related ill health in this country. The food pyramid is a useful tool that can be individualised based on your age, gender and activity level to ensure you get the balance right.

The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over



Copyright: Healthy Ireland

Use the food pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion sizes.

- **Vegetables, salad and fruit group**
(5 or more servings a day)

For healthy eating, everyone should base all their meals on plenty of foods from this food group. Fruit and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals and fibre that protect against heart disease and cancer. They are also low in calories and help control body weight.

- **Wholemeal cereal and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice group**
(3 to 5 servings a day)

These foods are your body's main source of energy and you should try to eat some at every meal. Choose whole grain foods as they have a higher fibre content. This means they are digested more slowly and are more filling. Although carbohydrates are low in fat, portion size is important to prevent taking in greater amounts of energy than you need over time. The type of carbohydrate is also important. More processed varieties like white bread, white pasta and white rice don't have as much fibre or nutrients as the whole grain versions. The amount of this food group you need

depends on your age, gender and physical activity level, check out the daily servings guide below.

1 serving size is:

- 2 thin slices wholemeal bread
- 1½ slices wholemeal soda bread or 1 pita pocket
- ½ cup dry porridge oats
- 1 cup flaked type cereal
- 1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles or couscous
- 2 medium or 4 small potatoes
- 1 cup yam or plantain

- **Milk, yogurt and cheese group**
(3 servings a day, 5 servings for children age 9–12 and teenagers age 13–18)

Dairy foods are a good source of protein and calcium which is important for strong bones and teeth. However, the fat content in dairy foods varies, and they're often high in saturated fat. Choose low-fat milk and yogurt more often and enjoy cheese occasionally. Cheese is a rich source of calcium and protein. Be aware of portion size because many cheeses are also high in fat, saturated fat and salt, one serving of cheese is 30g (1 oz).

Did you know?

The sugars found in natural yogurt are natural milk sugars e.g. lactose. These can be present in yogurt between 3-7g per 100g. Therefore the sugar content of flavoured yogurts can be a mixture of natural milk sugars and added sugars.

Choose yogurts that contain up to 9g of sugar per 100g. This allows for the natural milk sugar present and up to one teaspoon (4g) of added sugar.

- **Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts group**
(2 servings a day)

These foods are a good source of protein and iron. To get the real value of this food group, vary your protein choices throughout the week. Choose a variety of lean, unprocessed red meat (2-3 days per week) and poultry (2-3 days per week).

Oily fish is a rich source of vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids called EPA and DHA which protect against heart disease and stroke. White fish and shellfish are low in fat and calories. Aim for fish twice per week, one of which to be oily.

Include peas, beans and lentils as a protein source 1-2 days per week as they provide good-quality protein and are a low-fat, high-fibre alternative to meat. A serving is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cooked beans, peas or lentils and 40g unsalted nuts or seeds.

Limit processed meats such as ham, sausages, luncheon meats and salami, which are high in fat and salt.



- **Fats, spreads and oils group**
(small amounts only)

Some fat is needed in the diet, but it is important to limit the overall amount of all fats, spreads and oils eaten, because all are very high in calories.

The main types of fats are:

- **Saturated and trans fats**
 - can raise the level of bad cholesterol in your blood, which may increase your risk of heart and circulatory diseases. These need to be limited or avoided as much as possible.

- **Unsaturated fats** - can help lower your cholesterol. Replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats these include polyunsaturated fats e.g. corn oil, sunflower oil, safflower seed oil and linseed oil and monounsaturated fats e.g. rapeseed oil, olive oil, sesame seed oil, almond oil and spreads rich in these fats.



- **Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt**
These foods are high in calories, fat, sugar and salt, but low in fibre, vitamins and minerals. They should be limited to maximum 1-2 per week. The fat and sugar in biscuits, cakes, crisps, crackers, confectionery, etc means that they are very high in calories. The types of fats in these foods are also harmful for heart health. Healthier snack options include; a handful of unsalted nuts, piece of fruit or a low fat yogurt.

- **Shake the salt habit!**

Eating too much salt can lead to high blood pressure which increases the risk of heart and circulatory diseases. Nearly everyone needs to reduce the amount of salt they have in their diet. About 75% of the salt we eat comes from processed foods e.g. ready-made pizza, condiments and sauces, canned foods and canteen/restaurant food.

To reduce your salt intake:

- **Use herbs and spices to flavour food instead of salt.**
- **Keep salt away from your dining table.**
- **Eat less snacks and processed foods and eat more fresh foods.**



- 1 Plan ahead - make a shopping list and stick to it.
- 2 Try to avoid food shopping when hungry - You are more likely to impulse buy high-fat and sugar foods.
- 3 Instead of pre-made sauces e.g. pasta sauces, stock up on tinned tomatoes, herbs and spices, to prepare home-made sauces quickly without the added fat, sugar and salt.
- 4 Aim to fill your basket with a range of fruit and vegetables, frozen varieties can be useful and a nutritious alternative to fresh.

5 Read food labels carefully and choose lower fat and sugar varieties where possible. The traffic light system below is a guide to help you make healthier food choices when shopping.

6 When choosing breads, pasta, rice and cereals, choose whole grain varieties, check that they contain 6g of fibre or more per 100g on the nutrition label.



Croi's Traffic Light Card will help you make better choices

PUT A TRAFFIC LIGHT ON EVERY FOOD

All measures per 100g	LOW A healthier choice	MED OK most of the time	HIGH Just occasionally
Fat	3g or less	3.1g - 17.5g	More than 17.5g
Saturates	1.5g or less	1.6g - 5g	More than 5g
Sugars	5g or less	5.1g - 22.5g	More than 22.5g
Salt	0.3g or less	0.31g - 1.5g	More than 1.5g

High Fibre = **6g** or more fibre per 100g

- **Green** = healthy food choice everyday.
- **Orange** = slow down, think about it, watch portion size and frequency.
- **Red** = stop, high in fat, sugar and/or salt. Limit to 1-2 per week.

Did you know?

A nutrition label on a food product always provides information per 100g. This allows you to compare different brands and varieties of foods easily.

Getting the balance right - a guide to portion sizes

Eating the right amount of food goes hand-in-hand with having a balanced diet. Often if you're struggling with your weight, your portion sizes could be the reason why. You need more of some foods and less of others. Eating too much or too little of any of the major food groups can affect your health. The recommended number of portions for each food group for an individual will vary depending on your life stage, how old you are, whether you're male or female, and how active you are.



200ml plastic cup for cooked rice, pasta, cereals, veg, salad and fruit.



Palm of hand for meat, poultry and fish (half palm x2 as per our portion plate).



2 thumbs, width and depth for cheese.



Reduced fat spread - 1 pack of butter for 2 slices of bread.



Oils - 1 teaspoon/tip of thumb per person or when cooking or in salads.

Top tips to help control portion sizes

- **Try serving food on smaller plates** to help reduce portion size. The same amount of food looks bigger and more filling on a smaller plate.
- **Avoid eating from the packet.** Put snacks in a bowl and put the rest away so you're less likely to eat them all.
- When eating out, **avoid doubling up on carbohydrates**, go for vegetable soup/side salad with a sandwich instead of chips or crisps.
- **Leave 20 minutes after eating** before going for seconds. It can take 20 minutes for our stomach to signal to our brain that it is full.
- At mealtimes, **aim for a ½ plate of veg or salad**, ¼ wholemeal carbohydrates and ¼ protein.
- **Think about your food intake** over the day - if you know you're having a big dinner, have a smaller lunch.

Mindful eating

How you eat is important. With today's busy lifestyles, we can be easily distracted and not tuned in to how we eat. By learning to eat mindfully, you can begin to savour and appreciate the joy of eating, and learn to eat less in the process, helping to lose weight more easily and quickly, if you need to.

- **Slow down when eating.** Take time to pause while you're eating by putting your cutlery down between bites. Making sure you chew thoroughly will also help you to feel full before you have overeaten, which will help you to eat less over time.
- **Remember to avoid distractions** such as TV, eating on the go, or eating while working so that you can really enjoy your food in the moment.
- **Use all of your five senses:** sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound to fully appreciate the experience of eating.
- **Listen to your body.** Take note of how you feel when you are really hungry and also when you're full.
- **Learn to be in tune with your thoughts and feelings.** Recognise when you are eating for reasons other than hunger and tune in to what triggers you to snack or over eat.

Cooking tips for a healthier you!

- » Bake, steam, boil, poach or stew instead of frying or deep frying.
- » Avoid/limit adding fat to vegetables, on bread, during cooking or in baking.
- » To prevent nutrient loss during cooking, use as little water as possible when boiling or try steaming or microwaving instead. Keep cooking time short so that they retain a 'bite' and avoid overcooking.
- » Use reduced-salt stock cubes and avoid drippings to make gravy.
- » Trim the fat off meat and remove the skin from poultry before cooking.
- » Choose tomato-based sauces instead of creamy sauces for pasta and rice dishes.
- » Add lentils, or beans e.g. cannellini or kidney to stews and soups to increase the fibre.
- » Use oils such as olive, rapeseed, corn, sunflower, safflower or vegetable and limit to one teaspoon of oil per person when cooking.
- » Do not add salt when cooking, make use of herbs and spices instead.

Managing your weight

Weight & Health

Carrying excess weight can affect our health and increase the chances of developing heart disease, cancer and diabetes. However, there are lots of things that can affect bodyweight and losing weight is often challenging. For many people, lifestyle changes can help with weight management, but more importantly, lifestyle changes can help improve aspects of your health such as blood pressure, cholesterol and fitness levels, independent of weight loss.

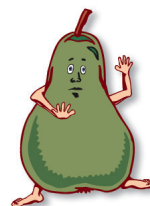
If your weight is starting to affect your health, and you feel that you are struggling to manage your weight by yourself, it is often helpful to chat with your GP who can refer you to specialist supports.




What does your body shape say about your health?

Your shape, as much as your weight, can affect your health risk. People who are 'apple' shaped (carry excess weight around their middle) are at higher risk than those who are 'pear' shaped (carry weight around hips and thighs). Fat around your middle can increase your risk of getting heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes. That's because these fat cells can have a harmful effect on how your hormones work and can:

- Raise your blood cholesterol
- Increase your blood pressure
- Reduce your body's ability to use insulin, increasing your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.



You can work out if you're at increased risk by simply measuring midway between the top of your hip bone and the bottom of your rib cage using a tape measure. It should fit snugly but do not squeeze. It won't be the same as your jean size or trouser measurement.



	Women	Men
Healthy waist measurement	Less than 80cm (32")	Less than 94cm (37")
Increased risk measurement	Between 80cm & 88cms (32"-35")	Between 94cm & 102cms (37"-40")
Substantial risk measurement	More than 88cm (35")	More than 102cm (40")

Making changes

Now you have the basics of healthy eating, it's time to think about what steps you can take to make some healthy changes.

- 1. Keep a food diary** - You can then compare your eating pattern to the food pyramid healthy eating guidelines on page 4. This will help you identify the habits you have and identify what changes you need to make.
- 2. Set smart goals** - Once you have identified areas in your diet you would like to change, it can be really helpful to set goals. Goals help you focus on making realistic changes that will make a difference to your lifestyle and health.
- 3. Review your goals** and think about any potential challenges such as social occasions, work stress, time limitations and supports available e.g. mindfulness, friend or family support, healthy recipes online.
- 4. Make an action plan** to succeed e.g. prepare a weekly shopping list at weekends, look up healthy recipes or prepare a weekly menu.
- 5. Ask yourself why** you want to make the changes, this will help you to stay motivated. Everyone has their own unique reasons, it might be to have more energy, to play with grandchildren, improve your blood pressure or reduce your risk of developing diabetes.



When setting goals, make sure they're S M A R T:

- » **Specific** – Be clear about the change you are making. Instead of saying “I’m going to eat healthier”, think about exactly how that will happen e.g. a goal could be “I am going to include salad in my sandwich at work every day.”
- » **Measurable** – Be able to measure your success e.g. decide on how many portions of fruit and vegetables you are going to eat per day.
- » **Achievable** – Be realistic about the changes you plan to make. Start with small, gradual changes as you are more likely to succeed e.g. switching from full-fat milk to skimmed milk or swapping your bag of crisps at lunch time for a piece of fruit.
- » **Relevant** – Make sure your goals focus on areas of your diet and lifestyle that need to change e.g. if you have high blood pressure and are adding salt at the table, a goal may be to add black pepper instead and remove the salt cellar from the table.
- » **Time-specific** – Put a timeline on when and how often you will make the change e.g. every day for breakfast. This will make it easier to work out if you have achieved your goal.



Healthy meal ideas!

Breakfast of Champions

Rushed mornings can make it hard to fit in time for breakfast, however, it is a really important meal. Eating a healthy breakfast is linked to:

- Healthy weight and reduced weight gain over time.
- Improved appetite control which can prevent over snacking during the day.
- Better intake of key nutrients e.g. calcium, vitamin D, potassium and fibre.

Healthy breakfast options:

- Porridge oats with low-fat milk or yogurt and handful of chopped fruit
- Omelette with spinach and sliced tomatoes
- 1-2 poached or boiled egg on whole grain toast with low fat spread
- Low fat natural yogurt (125g) with chopped banana and handful of mixed nuts



Healthy lunch options:

- Wholemeal bread sandwich with tinned salmon, onion, lettuce and tomatoes
- Mixed veg and bean soup with 1 slice of whole grain bread
- Wholemeal pasta (1 cup cooked) salad with handful of chopped lean chicken, tomato, spring onion and pepper and a drizzle of olive oil (1 teaspoon), lemon juice and black pepper
- Wholemeal pita bread with tinned tuna, sweetcorn, lettuce and cucumber



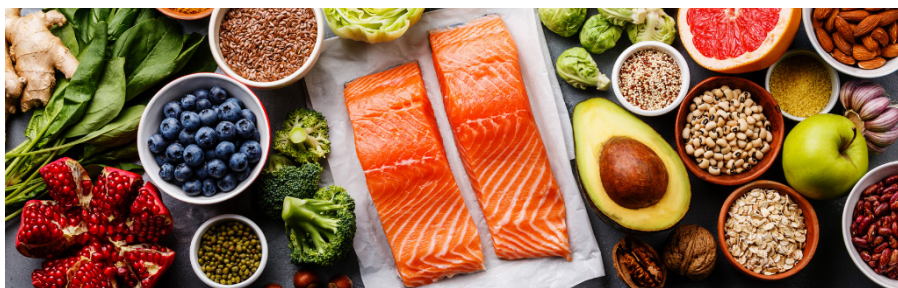
Healthy main meal options:

- Lean beef/lamb/pork stew with lots of mixed vegetables, added herbs and spices and a low salt stock cube
- Baked salmon fillet served with 2 medium size potatoes and plenty of broccoli or mixed vegetables
- Chickpea and lentil curry with brown rice
- Baked chicken fillets with garlic and lemon served with 2 medium potatoes and a mixed salad

The Mediterranean diet

Putting a Mediterranean twist on your eating pattern can help keep your heart healthy! Research shows that following a Mediterranean style diet can help with lowering blood pressure and cholesterol and reduces your risk of developing heart disease.

- Base meals on plant-based foods like, vegetables, salad, lentils and pulses.
- Reduce red meat intake to 2-3 times per week and eat more fish (2 per week, one of which to be oily) and lean poultry (2-3 times per week).
- Use healthy fats like rapeseed or olive oil when preparing foods.
- Enjoy three meals a day with healthy snacks in between if you are hungry.
- Flavour food with spices, herbs, garlic and onions instead of salt.



Food planner

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



CROÍ CONNECTS

HEART & STROKE SUPPORT

Croí Connects is Croí's free support service for people living with, or affected by, heart disease and stroke. This service offers a free telephone support helpline, plus free weekly heart health chats.

Croí Connects Telephone Helpline

Croí Connects (formerly Heartlink West) Telephone Helpline is available for those living with, or affected by, heart disease and stroke. When you call, you will be connected with one of our Cardiac Nurse Specialists or you can join one of our weekly virtual health chats!

Our team is available Monday to Friday from 9:00am – 5:30pm. To arrange to speak with our experts, please call **091 544310** or email **healthteam@croi.ie**.



Croí Connects Virtual Chats

The Croí Connects virtual chat is an interactive chat which takes place weekly, via Zoom. Each week focuses on a different heart health topic.

To register for our free Croí Connects virtual chats, visit:
www.croi.ie/croi-connects

Croí also regularly host free, public webinars where we are joined by a panel of experts to discuss various heart health topics and answer questions from the public. Keep an eye on our website, **www.croi.ie**, for up-to-date information on our health events.

For further information contact **091 544310**
or email **healthteam@croi.ie**



Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

The challenges facing people living with heart disease and stroke are now greater than any that have come before.

Croí, the Heart & Stroke Charity, has always worked tirelessly to respond to the needs of the community, and with your support, we continue to do that. People living with heart disease and stroke need our support now, more than ever. Your support allows us to continue providing essential services such as our Heartlink West telephone helpline and virtual health chats, and our online support groups which help people living with heart disease and stroke. Your gift will also help fund the Croí Courtyard Apartments, which allows families to stay together, free of charge, while one of them is receiving cardiac or stroke care in Galway University Hospital – a priceless gift during a stressful time.



As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, all our activities are funded from our own fundraising initiatives and revenue generating activities. We are not a state-funded organisation so each year we have to generate enough revenue to ensure we can continue to lead the fight against heart disease and stroke in the region.

Please give to Croí today.

Your donation can be sent:

By Post: Croí Heart & Stroke Centre,
Moyola Lane, Newcastle,
Galway, H91 FF68

Online: www.croi.ie
By phone: 091 544 310

Registered Charity CHY 7500

I would like to support Croí

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Mobile:

I am happy to receive information
from Croí by: (please tick)

☐

Email

☐

Phone

☐

Post

I wish to make a one-time donation: (please tick)

☐

€25

☐

€50

☐

€100

☐

€250

☐

Other €

I wish to make a regular
monthly gift by direct debit:

☐

€5

☐

€50

☐

€10

(Please tick)

☐

€21

☐

Other €

Preferred Start Date: Day Month Year

Bank Name & Address:

Account Name(s):

Account No:

Sort Code:

Please debit my/our account number and pay the amount specified above to
Croí, until you receive further notice from me/us in writing.

Signature:

Date:

All donations of €250 or more in a year (€21 per month) are eligible for tax
relief at 31%, increasing the value of your gift at no additional cost to you.



Croi House

Moyola Lane, Newcastle,
Galway, H91 FF68



+353 (0)91 544 310



healthteam@croi.ie



www.croi.ie



@croiheartstroke

CR*í*
Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke