



How Can I Cook Healthfully?

A healthful eating plan means more than just choosing the right foods to eat. It's important to prepare foods in a healthy way. Some ways of cooking are better than others for cutting saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, added sugars and calories. At the same time, you want to maximize your nutritional benefits.

You don't have to give up taste or the main and side dishes you love. Just learn some heart-healthy cooking skills and you can have it all (almost)!



Stir-frying can be a healthy and delicious way to cook! The high temperature cooks the food fast. Stirring the food constantly keeps it from sticking and burning. For vegetables, poultry or seafood, use a nontropical liquid vegetable oil in your stir-fry pan or wok.

What are good ways to cook?

- **Roast** — in the oven with a rack so the meat or poultry doesn't sit in fat drippings. Set at 350 degrees to avoid searing. Baste with liquids like fat-free, low-sodium beef, chicken or vegetable broth, low-sodium tomato juice or fresh lemon juice. Roasting is also a delicious way to prepare seasonal vegetables.
- **Bake** — in the oven in covered or uncovered cookware. When you bake, food cooks slowly with gentle heat. The food's moisture evaporates slowly, enhancing flavor.
- **Braise or Stew** — on top of the stove or in the oven with a little bit of liquid (water or broth). After cooking, you can refrigerate the food. Before reheating, skim off any fat that has become solid on the top.
- **Poach** — by immersing foods, such as skinless chicken, fish or eggs, in simmering liquid.
- **Grill or Broil** — on a rack with high heat.

- **Sauté** — in a skillet or frying pan over direct heat. Use cooking spray or a small amount of canola oil.
- **Stir-fry** — in a wok or stir-fry pan over high heat with a small amount of a nontropical vegetable oil.
- **Microwave** — heat food quickly in a microwaveable dish.
- **Steam** — in a wire basket over simmering water. Steaming can work better than boiling to help some foods keep their shape and texture.

How can I cut saturated fat, sodium and calories without losing taste?

- Add lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains to your meals. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. More color equals more nutrients. Make half the grains you eat whole grains. Check the ingredients list and select products with a whole-grain ingredient listed first.
- Include different lean protein foods in your diet. Along with meats, poultry and seafood, dried

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beans or peas, eggs, soy, nuts and seeds are also in the lean protein group.

- Select lean and extra-lean cuts of meat and trim off any visible fat before cooking. After browning, transfer ground meat to a colander to drain off excess fat. Remove poultry skin before or after cooking (always before serving).
- Choose canned tuna, salmon or sardines packed in water with no added salt or look for brands with the lowest sodium.
- Don't overcook vegetables. Steam or bake them instead of boiling so they keep more of their natural flavor and texture.
- Compare Nutrition Facts labels to find a tasty salad dressing that's lower in calories, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars.
- Use fresh and dried herbs and spices to add flavor to foods.



Instead of boiling vegetables, steam or bake them to keep more of their natural flavor and texture.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get **Heart Insight**, a free e-newsletter for heart patients and their families, at [HeartInsight.org](https://www.heartinsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://www.heart.org/SupportNetwork).

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What about desserts?

What's a good cookbook with healthy recipes?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.