

A Healthy Life



How food and physical activity affect your health



Research saves lives!

Hjärt-Lungfonden is a non-profit organisation. Our goal is to create a world where people don't get heart or lung disease. In this way, we want to help people live a longer and healthier life. We do this by donating money to research, and by spreading the knowledge researchers find.

This booklet is one way to spread knowledge. Thanks to donations from private persons and businesses, Hjärt-Lungfonden have been able to put together this booklet.

I hope you will enjoy it!



Kristina Sparreljung

Secretary General,
Hjärt-Lungfonden

Tips for living a longer and healthier life

This booklet provides information on how eating healthy and being active can have a positive effect on your health. Research shows that a good diet and keeping active every day help to keep us healthy and living longer. Research also shows that even small changes can make a big difference.



Start with something simple, like taking the stairs instead of the lift.

Once you've managed to change a habit, it will be easier to make bigger changes in your life.

Be inspired!

All the tips in this booklet are based on research.

Good food for your health

Eat a varied diet to feel good

There are many diets and tips on how to eat healthily, both online and in magazines. It can be difficult to know what works. That's why it's best to listen to what scientists say.

Thousands of studies on food and health show the same thing. The most important thing for us to feel good is to eat a varied diet, not to overeat, and to exercise. That way we get a good balance.

Examples of foods that make us feel good are:

- Vegetables
- Legumes such as lentils, beans and peas
- Fruit
- Fish
- Unsaturated fats, such as olive oil and rapeseed oil
- Wholegrain foods.

These types of foods contain important nutrients that our body needs. Such as vitamins, minerals, protein, fat and carbohydrates. They also reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.



Foods that can make us ill

There are also things we eat and drink that don't give the body much nutrition. Some examples are soft drinks, sweets, pastries and cakes. These foods contain a lot of sugar that can make us ill.

Foods with a lot of salt also increase the risk of disease. So does beef, pork and lamb.

Bad eating habits can lead to the following:

- Too much cholesterol and other fats in the blood
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- Becoming overweight or having abdominal obesity (belly fat)

These can lead to cardiovascular disease. But you can help to avoid all these risks by eating well and keeping active.

MORE



- Vegetables, fruit and berries
- Fish and seafood
- Nuts and seeds
- Daily physical activity

LESS

- Red meat and cured meats
- Salt
- Sugar
- Alcohol

CHANGE

- White flour
- Saturated fats, such as butter
- Fatty dairy products

TO

- Wholegrains
- Unsaturated fats, such as olive oil and rapeseed oil
- Low-fat dairy products

Look for the Keyhole symbol when you shop

Foods marked with the Keyhole symbol contain less sugar and salt, and more wholegrains and fibre. They also contain healthier fats or less fat.



The Keyhole symbol can be found on many items, such as fresh and frozen vegetables, oils, milk, bread, fresh fish, and cereal boxes.

TIP!

Opt for foods with the Keyhole symbol next time you shop!



Fruit and vegetables

Vegetables, fruits and berries are rich in vitamins, minerals, and other healthy substances. Vegetables and fruit are also high in fibre. Fibre makes you feel full, and is also beneficial to the stomach.



Ideally, you should eat at least 500 g of vegetables and fruit a day.

That's about two big handfuls of vegetables, root vegetables and pulses, and two pieces of fruit. Potatoes are not included in the 500 grams, but they are good for you anyway.

Mixing fruit and vegetables of different colours gives you a variety of vitamins and minerals that are good for your body. You can vary between raw and cooked vegetables. Onions and chopped tomatoes are also vegetables.

TIP!

You can have frozen vegetables at home. They are just as healthy as fresh vegetables.

Fish and seafood

Eat fish at least two to three times a week. Vary between different types of fish. These will give you a lot of healthy substances, such as vitamin D, iodine and selenium. Fish oil capsules do not give your body all the essential substances that you get from eating fish.

Fish and seafood reduce the risk of many common diseases. Fatty fish, such as salmon, herring and mackerel, contain omega-3 fats. They reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Omega-3 fats are also good for the brain.

TIP!

You can eat fish in a variety of ways. Make fish burgers, fried fish cakes, fish stews and soups, breaded fish, or baked fish.



The plate model helps you to eat right



**The plate model for those who don't do
much physical activity.**



**The plate model for those who get
more physical activity and therefore need
more energy.**

The plate model shows you how to distribute the food on your plate by adding more vegetables for a balanced diet.

The plate model consists of three parts:

- **The first and largest part** consists of vegetables and root vegetables. If you don't do much physical activity, you can fill half of your plate with vegetables and root vegetables.
- **The second part** consists of potatoes, pasta, bread and grains, such as rice, bulgur, couscous, oats and barley. If you get a lot of physical activity, you can increase your amount of these foods.
- **The third and smallest part** consists of meat, fish, eggs and legumes, such as beans, lentils and peas.

The plate model shows you how food can be distributed on your plate. It does not show you how much food you should eat. This depends on how hungry you are, and how much energy your body needs.

If you get a lot of physical activity, you need more food than if you lead a more sedentary lifestyle.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds contain healthy fats and other substances that are good for your body. Some examples of these substances are magnesium, zinc, antioxidants and fibre.

Unsalted nuts and seeds can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Research shows that eating a few tablespoons of nuts and seeds every day is good for your health.

You can eat nuts in many different ways. Use nuts in baking or sprinkle them on your yoghurt, salad or soup.

TIP!

You can make many sauces and dips by using nuts, such as pesto made from pine nuts, or a delicious red pepper and roasted walnut dip.



Wholegrains

Choose wholegrains when eating pasta, bread, rice or porridge. These foods are made from the whole grain. Often, only parts of the grain are used. But if you use the whole grain, it's called wholegrain.

There are lots of nutrients in the different parts of the grain. Some beneficial substances found in wholegrains are fibre, iron, folate and antioxidants.

Wholegrains help you to stay healthy and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Eat wholegrains every day. Wholegrains make you feel full, which can help you to avoid gaining weight. Oatmeal, wheatberries and hulled barley are always made from the wholegrain.

TIP!

Eat crispbread.
It often contains a lot
of wholegrain.



The food pyramid shows us how we should eat to feel good

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes such as beans, peas and lentils, root vegetables, berries, fruit and wholegrains.
- Eat 1–2 tablespoons of unsalted nuts and seeds every day.
- Choose rapeseed oil or olive oil instead of butter.
- Eat fish and seafood a few times a week.
- Also eat some chicken, eggs and dairy products.
- Don't eat a lot of red meat, cured meats, or sweet things.
- Drink water when you are thirsty.



The food pyramid



Healthy fats

Rapeseed oil and olive oil are examples of unsaturated fats. They are healthier than saturated fats, such as butter, palm oil and coconut oil.

Rapeseed oil contains omega-3 fats. This is a type of fat that the body needs but cannot produce on its own.



Olive oil contains antioxidants that protect our cells. Food marked with the Keyhole symbol also contain cooking fats.

Research clearly shows that we reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease when we replace some of our saturated fat with unsaturated fat.

TIP!

Replace butter with liquid fats or oil when baking.

Dairy products

Dairy products are made from milk. Examples include yoghurt, cheese and cream.

Dairy products contain calcium, which is good for your bones and teeth.

But dairy products are also high in saturated fat. Flavoured dairy products can also be high in sugar. Therefore, choose natural, low-fat dairy products.

This reduces the risk of various diseases, such as heart attacks, strokes and type 2 diabetes.

TIP!

Don't eat cream-based gravy. Instead, squeeze some lemon juice on your fish or chicken. Or make a delicious tomato salsa!



Meat

Eating too much red meat and cured meats is bad for your health. Red meat includes beef, pork, lamb, reindeer and game. Examples of cured meats are sausages, bacon, gammon, smoked ham, salami, liver pâté and blood pudding.

Eat less than 500 g of meat per week. That's about four meals with meat. This reduces the risk of colon and rectum cancer. Cured meats also often contain high levels of salt and saturated fat, which can cause cardiovascular disease.

TIP!

Replace some of the meat with soya, peas, beans, chickpeas or lentils.



Salt

Salt contains sodium, which the body needs. But if you eat too much salt, you can get high blood pressure. This increases your risk of heart attack, heart failure, strokes and kidney damage.

Consume a maximum of six grams of salt per day. Many of us eat about twice as much. Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods, such as cured meat, bread, butter, cheese and ready-meals. Broth and soy sauce also contain a lot of salt.

It is a good idea to choose salt that contains iodine, as iodine is needed for the body's metabolism.

TIP!

Reduce your salt intake by using herbs, lemon, garlic, ginger, chilli and other spices.



Sugar

Foods high in sugar contain many calories, but almost no nutrition. A lot of sugar therefore increases your risk of becoming overweight. This can lead to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.

Some foods may seem healthy but actually contain a lot of sugar. Examples of this include flavoured yoghurt, sweet cereals and fruit purées. Sweet drinks are high in calories but are not filling. They can increase the risk of obesity. High levels of sugar in tea and coffee also increase the risk of obesity.

Drink water if you are thirsty. Water is much better than soft drinks, juices, juice concentrate or sports drinks.

Alcohol

Drinks with alcohol contain many calories but almost no nutrition. Some alcoholic drinks also contain a lot of sugar. Two cans of strong beer have as many calories as a whole meal. So if you drink a lot of alcohol, you can become overweight.

Alcohol damages all our cells and organs in the body, and can cause many different diseases.

Drinking a lot of alcohol increases the risk of high blood pressure. This can lead to cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes.

The Swedish National Food Agency says that women should not drink more than 10 g of alcohol per day. Men should not drink more than 20 g of alcohol per day. A bottle of strong beer or a glass of wine contains about 15 g of alcohol.

TIP!

If you drink wine, alternate it with water (every second glass).



Summary

Tips for good eating habits and a healthy life

- Eat plenty of vegetables, fruit, lentils, beans and peas
- Choose rapeseed oil or olive oil instead of butter
- Replace white bread with wholegrain bread
- Do not eat too much red meat, cured meats, sugar or salt
- Save soft drinks, sweets, cakes and alcohol for special occasions
- Eat more vegetarian food
- Choose foods marked with the Keyhole symbol
- Eat a varied diet and avoid fast weight-loss diets
- It's what you eat every day that counts. Not what you occasionally eat.

Visit sundkurs.se for more tips on healthy eating and living.





Keep healthy with physical activity


Research clearly shows that physical activity protects against common cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks and strokes. It offers significant protection even if you are only moderately active.

What does physical activity do to your body?

Your body feels good when you are active. Some positive effects are immediate. For example, if you stand up and move around from time to time instead of sitting for long periods, you will feel more energetic. It also affects your body's blood sugar and insulin levels. Other positive effects will only begin to show when you are more active on a more frequent basis.

You can prevent and treat many diseases through physical activity. Some examples of such diseases are:

- Cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks and strokes
- Type 2 diabetes
- Dementia
- Cancer
- Arthritis
- Back and joint pain
- Osteoporosis
- Inflammatory diseases
- Depression and anxiety



**Move your
body for at least
30 minutes
every day!**

Taking the stairs is good exercise for both your muscles and your fitness. Start gently and gradually increase the number of steps.

Some examples of how physical activity and exercise affect the body:

- Reduces the risk of obesity
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers blood sugar
- Reduces the risk of blood clots
- Reduces stress
- Reduces the risk of depression

We spend too much time sitting

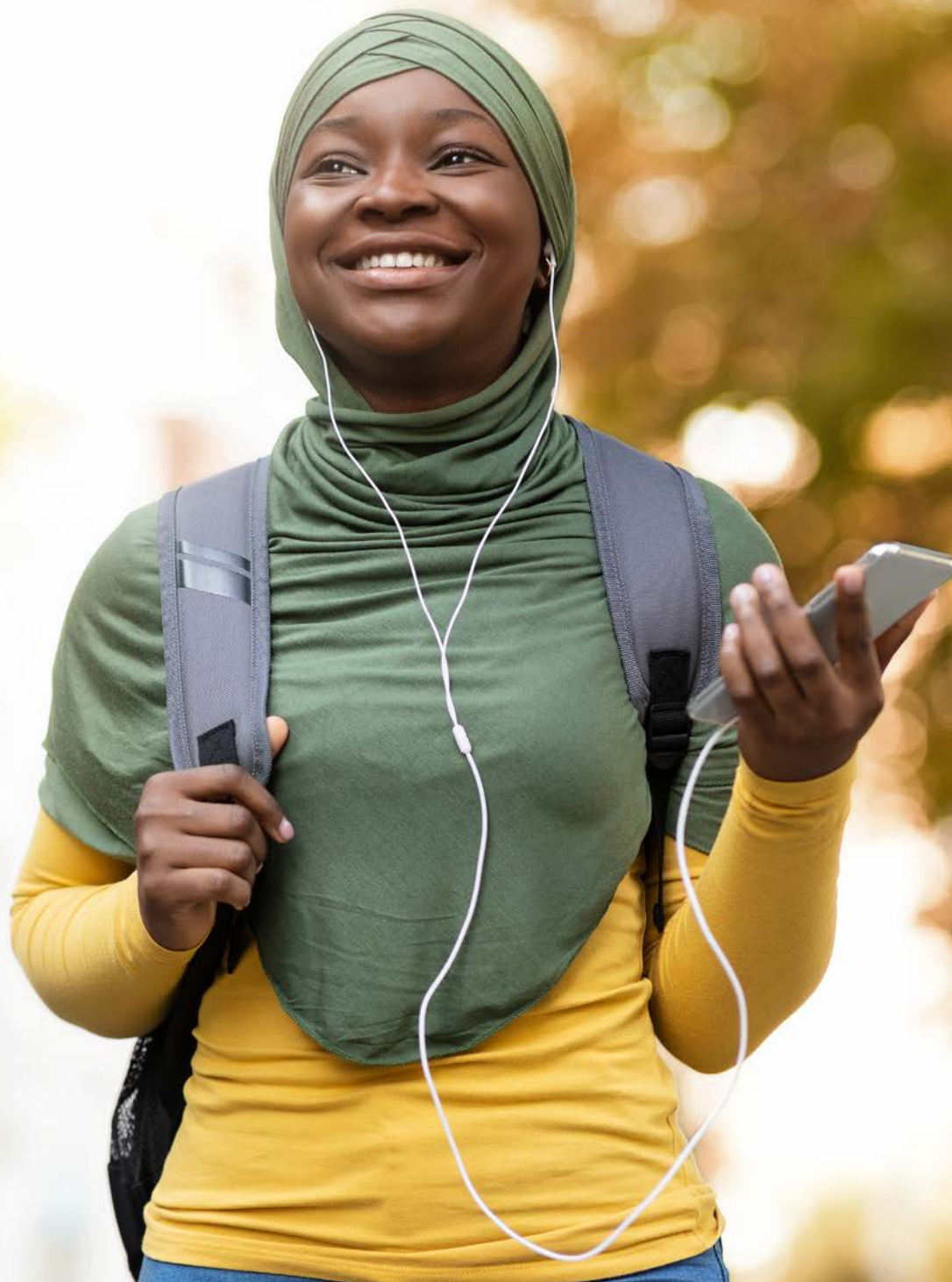
Studies show that in Sweden, we spend more time sitting than we think we do. A Swedish study shows that people aged between 50 and 64 spend nine to ten hours a day sitting. Often three to four hours at a time. Very few people get enough physical activity.

There are many good tricks you can use to spend less time sitting. Use your phone or an egg timer to remind you to get up once every half hour. Also get up and move around when there are adverts on the TV, or between episodes of a series.



TIP!

Stand up or walk while talking on the phone.



The physical activity pyramid



The physical activity pyramid gives us examples of how to keep active

The pyramid gives us examples of how to keep active for both physical and mental health. At the base of the pyramid, you can see all the ways we can keep active in everyday life, such as walking, cleaning, working in the garden, and playing with children.

In addition to daily activities, we need at least 150 minutes of more intensive exercise per week. You can do this by walking fast, jogging or cycling.

We also need to exercise the body's large muscles, such as those in the legs, abdomen, back and arms, about two to three times a week.



TIP!

Warm up and get sweaty through physical activity for at least 30 minutes every day!



Every move counts

Research shows that sitting too much is bad for your health. Research also shows that all physical activity makes a difference. So you do not have to exercise for ten minutes at a time to get an effect. Every minute, every step, and every movement counts.

Try to walk at least 7,500 steps each day. Keep track of your steps using a pedometer or an app on your phone.

If you are sedentary for long periods, you should stand up every half hour and move your body for a few minutes.

TIP!

Take the stairs
instead of the lift.


Physical activity if you have a heart or lung condition

Even if you have a heart or lung condition, you should move your body so you can feel good. This also applies after a heart attack. Regular exercise after a heart attack reduces your risk of another one. Most hospitals offer exercise with an instructor if you have had a heart attack. This is a good and safe way to get back into exercising.

People with heart failure often get breathless easily. It is still a good idea for people with heart failure to try to move their body.

Aquatic exercises can be helpful. A physiotherapist can help you to exercise in a pool if you have heart failure.

Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about exercising if you have heart or lung disease. Also remember to listen to your body when you exercise. If you feel any pain or discomfort, you should stop and rest.



**Short walks
are better
than no walks
at all.**

Researchers agree on how food and physical activity affect our health

Accumulated research clearly shows that our lifestyle has a major impact on our health. Most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented.

The most important things you can do are to eat well, stay active, sleep well, avoid stress, and not smoke. In this way, you can improve your health even if you are already ill.





Good food saves lives

Poor eating habits carry the biggest risk of bad health and premature death in Sweden. Many of us eat too much salt and too few vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, nuts and seeds.

A study from Lund University shows that one in four people who died of cardiovascular disease would have lived longer if they had eaten healthier food.


Research on eating habits and lifestyles in Sweden is worrying

When researchers compared eating habits in the five Nordic countries, they found that Sweden has the worst eating habits. In Sweden, there are also big differences between people with a low and a high level of education. People with a low level of education generally eat less well.

Several studies from both Sweden and other countries also show that we are becoming increasingly unfit. In Sweden, there are also many children who do not get enough physical activity. This research into our habits and lifestyles is worrying.

Physical activity keeps us young

Physical activity is good for both our physical and mental health. Physical activity affects our body's cells. We keep our cells younger by leading an active life, rather than by maintaining a sedentary lifestyle.



**Move your
body for at least
30 minutes
every day!**



Medical Advisers

Mai-Lis Hellénus, Professor in
Prevention, Karolinska Institutet

Anette Jansson, Dietician and Public
Health Nurse, Hjärt-Lungfonden

Project Manager

Birgit Eriksson, Hjärt-Lungfonden

Text

Moa-Linn Nenzén, KAPI

Production and graphic design

Hjärt-Lungfonden

Illustrations

Kotryna Zukauskaite, page 1

Photos

iStock and Johnér

Print

Åtta.45, 2022

Sources

Hjärt-Lungfonden's publication Mat och rörelse för ett friskare liv

Nordiska Näringsrekommendationer,
Folkhälsomyndigheten, FYSS.se,

Fysisk aktivitet i Sjukdomsprevention and
Sjukdomsbehandling, YFA

Order the information free of charge

Hjärt-Lungfondens informational material can be ordered free of charge at **www.hjart-lungfonden.se**.

You can also subscribe to our digital newsletter via the website.



Your donation is greatly appreciated!

We are able to provide this booklet free of charge, thanks to the donations we receive from private persons and businesses. The donations are used to support important research.

This research helps people who suffer from heart or lung diseases.



Swish a donation to

90 91 92 7

if you also wish to support
the research.

