
Take Charge of Your Cholesterol Through Diet

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is found in all cells of the body. It can build up on the walls of your arteries (blood vessels that carry blood from your heart to other parts of the body). This buildup is called plaque. Over time, this plaque can build up, creating hardening of the small arteries around your heart, brain and other parts of the body. Here are tips and strategies to take charge of your cholesterol level through diet. Consult with a registered dietitian to help personalize your food plan.

Reduce the quantity of fat in your diet

- Limit added fat such as oil, margarine, butter and mayonnaise to one or two tablespoons per day.
- Limit salad dressing to one tablespoon per salad or choose a fat-free salad dressing.
- Choose low-fat and fat-free foods.
- Trim fat from meats; remove skin from poultry.
- Limit fried foods, pastries, cookies and candies.
- Use low-fat cooking methods such as baking, grilling, broiling, boiling, poaching and steaming – avoid frying.

Reduce saturated fat and avoid trans fat

- Reduce saturated fat and avoid trans fat to help lower your LDL, also known as your “bad” cholesterol.
- Choose non-fat or low-fat dairy products. Avoid whole milk, regular cheese, cream cheese, ice cream, sour cream and butter.
- Avoid traditional cream sauces and cream soups. Use tomato and broth-based sauces and soups instead.
- Limit high-fat meats such as hamburgers, hotdogs, sausage, cold cuts, bacon, ribs, salami, bologna, pastrami, and marbled cuts of beef and lamb.
- Trim the visible fat off of meats. Avoid the skin on poultry.
- Avoid stick margarine. Avoid shortening or anything containing “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.” Choose trans-free light or diet margarine.
- Reduce eating most commercial baked goods, snack foods and fast foods.
- Save cakes, pies and cookies for special occasions.

Reduce dietary cholesterol

- Limit whole eggs or egg yolks to three per week.
- Avoid liver and other organ meats.
- Limit the intake of high-fat animal protein (see high-fat meats above).

Choose heart-healthy monounsaturated fats as your source of dietary fat

- Choose small amounts of olive, peanut or canola oils for cooking and flavoring.
- Use avocado or natural-style nut butters (almond, peanut, sunflower seed, soy nut) instead of dairy butter or cream cheese on sandwiches.
- Snack on a few nuts and seeds rather than cookies or chips. You may have up to ¼ cup daily.

Increase Omega 3 fats

- Fatty fish known to be richest in omega 3 fats are salmon, mackerel, anchovies, herring and sardines.
- Most fish are good choices because they are lean sources of good-quality protein and contain omega 3 fatty acids.
Check out <http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx> to identify which are the best fish to eat based on sustainability and health.
- Include other sources of omega-3 fats such as ground flax seed, walnuts, soybean products and canola oil.
- Consult with your doctor or registered dietitian to see if you would benefit from taking a fish oil supplement.
- Eat fish at least twice a week and take a fish oil supplement as recommended by your health care provider.

Eat more high-fiber foods, especially those with soluble fiber

- Soluble fiber may reduce your LDL or “bad” cholesterol.
- Eat a high-fiber breakfast cereal such as All Bran, Fiber One, Kashi Go Lean, Optimum Slim, steel cut oatmeal or other cereal that has at least five grams of fiber per serving.
- Choose whole grain products such as whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice, polenta, millet, barley, amaranth, and quinoa. Include oatmeal, oat bran and barley as good sources of soluble fiber.
- Choose low-fat, whole grain crackers such as Rye Krisp, Ak Mak, Flatbread or brown rice cakes (rather than Ritz, Club crackers, Triscuit and Wheat Thins).
- Eat at least one cup of cooked legumes per week. Examples include kidney beans, pinto beans, lentils, chick peas, black beans, etc.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water daily to help the fiber work.
- Your total fiber goal is 25 to 35 grams daily; your soluble fiber goal is 10 to 20 grams daily.

Limit Sugary Foods

- Avoid beverages with high-fructose corn syrup and other sugary foods.
- Avoid regular sodas, fruit punch and caloric beverages sweetened with sugar or high-fructose corn syrup.
- Limit sugar, honey, syrups, jams, jellies and agave syrup.
- Avoid pastries, cookies, cakes, croissants and muffins.
- Avoid candies.

Taking Charge Simply

- Eat three regular meals and one to three planned snacks.
- Eat at least five cups of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Eat at least three one-ounce or ½ cup servings of fiber-rich whole grains per day.
- Eat at least four servings of nuts, seeds and legumes weekly.
- Eat at least two three-ounce servings of fish (preferably fatty) per week.
- Limit fruit juices and sugar sweetened beverages to no more than no more than four ounces per day.

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