

## How to Modify Recipes

Select lean cuts of meat and trim off all visible fat before cooking.

Use cooking methods that require little or no fat — boil, broil, bake, roast, steam, quick stir-fry or microwave.

Replace saturated fats with healthier substitutes. When a recipe calls for butter, lard, bacon fat or chicken fat, use canola, olive or safflower oils, or light margarine that is labeled "no trans fat" or has a saturated fat limit of 2 grams per tablespoon.

Serve moderate portions, and try "low-meat" dishes featuring pasta or rice with vegetables and healthy high-protein beans such as black beans or soybeans (edamame).



### SIMPLE SUBSTITUTES

If You Usually Eat:	Try:
Steak or hamburgers	Ground turkey — only 15% fat
Fried chicken	Skinless chicken or turkey
Pork bacon	Canadian bacon or turkey bacon
Whole milk or 2% milk	Skim milk or 1% low-fat milk
Cheese or sour cream	Low-fat cheese or low-fat sour cream
Sauces over vegetables	Steamed vegetables with sprinkled herbs
Potato chips	Rice cakes or pretzels
Pastries/sweets/chocolate	Low-fat angel food cake

### A Breakfast Winner

Oatmeal is considered one of the best foods for promoting healthy cholesterol. It's low in fat and high in fiber and nutrients. Instant oatmeal is easy to prepare — choose whole-grain oat varieties with no added sugar.



## More Cholesterol-Control Tips

**Aim for a healthy weight.** The key to weight management is to balance your energy-in (calories from food and drinks) with your energy-out (calories burned through exercise or other physical activity). Start by simply eating smaller portions and getting more exercise. Just 30 minutes or more of aerobic exercise most days can help to lower total cholesterol and triglycerides and boost healthy HDL cholesterol.

**Weight loss quick tip:** Losing 1 pound per week is easier when you cut 250 calories from your daily diet and walk briskly for about an hour most days.

**Limit sweets and go easy on starches.** These foods can flood your body with extra calories you're less likely to burn off; the excess calories are stored as fat.

**Limit alcohol consumption.** If you drink, do so in moderation. Women should have no more than one alcoholic drink a day and men no more than two. Excess amounts can raise triglycerides and blood pressure.

**If you smoke, quit.** Smoking as few as 20 cigarettes a week can substantially raise cholesterol levels.

**Relax more.** Stress is a major factor in raising LDL cholesterol levels. Set time aside each day, even if it is only 15 minutes, to enjoy quiet rest and relaxation.

**Work with your health care provider.** High cholesterol has no symptoms. Talk about your risk factors at your next checkup, and get the recommended screenings. Remember, it's best to first control your cholesterol naturally through changes in your exercise and eating habits, rather than by taking medication.

**Final thought:** Your body needs cholesterol, but when the body has more than it can use naturally, the excess builds up and puts you at higher risk for heart disease. **Best advice:** Know your cholesterol numbers, make healthy lifestyle changes (starting with diet and exercise) and work with your health care provider to keep your cholesterol in check.



# CHOLESTEROL & YOUR DIET

WHAT HELPS AND WHAT HURTS



## WHY CHOLESTEROL MATTERS

Blood cholesterol plays an important part in your risk for heart disease. When you have high blood cholesterol, the excess can cause a fatty buildup in the arteries of your heart.

The buildup becomes a plaque that thickens, hardens and can restrict blood flow to the point of causing heart attack or stroke.

### THE DIET-CHOLESTEROL CONNECTION

While various factors can lead to unhealthy blood cholesterol levels, diet plays an important part. You can help control your cholesterol by making better choices in the foods you eat. The tips in this brochure can help.

## Cholesterol Levels at a Glance

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance flowing through your blood. Your body generates most of it naturally for healthy purposes. However, the amount (and type) of fat in your diet can cause excess cholesterol to build up.

### CHOLESTEROL TERMS TO KNOW

- 1 **LDL** clogs your arteries, so less is better (less than 100 mg/dL).
- 2 **HDL** helps the body clear away the bad cholesterol, so more is better (at least 45 mg/dL but aim for 60).
- 3 **Triglycerides** work against heart health and should measure less than 150 mg/dL.
- 4 **A healthy total blood cholesterol level** is less than 200 mg/dL.

Note: Cholesterol goals are lower for people at very high risk for, or who already have, heart disease.

### CONTROL YOUR CHOLESTEROL: GETTING STARTED

A diet filled with whole, natural, plant-based foods is essential for cholesterol control. However, every food can fit into a healthy diet, so there's no need to deprive yourself of the foods you love. Just remember that some foods are best eaten only occasionally (maybe rarely), rather than regularly.

## Look at Food Labels

**Try this:** Compare the cholesterol section on the labels of different foods in your pantry (beans, rice and pasta, for example). Then check the labels on your milk, eggs, cheeses and meats in the refrigerator and freezer. You'll find that cholesterol and saturated fat amounts are much higher in meats, eggs, cheeses and dairy products. That's because:

- Cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin, not in plant foods.
- Foods with cholesterol also tend to be higher in saturated fat.

The average healthy person should take in no more than 300 mg of dietary cholesterol per day. People with heart disease should consume no more than 200 mg per day. Consider that one egg has roughly 200-300 mg of cholesterol. So think about the foods you eat daily and get an estimate of the cholesterol in your diet.

**The bottom line:** Many foods promote healthy blood cholesterol levels. But animal-based foods are major contributors to high cholesterol, especially foods high in saturated fat such as fatty meats, whole-milk dairy products and foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, shortening, or palm or coconut oil. The key is to eat a balanced diet, and to read and compare food labels and ingredients.

## The New Cholesterol Control

**Omega-3 fatty acids:** Omega-3s are noted for lowering triglycerides. **Good sources:** fatty fish, walnuts, flaxseed, and canola and soybean oils.

**Soluble fiber:** Soluble fiber has been shown to help lower blood cholesterol. **Good sources:** oatmeal and oat bran; dried beans and peas; rice bran and barley; and fruits and vegetables such as citrus fruits, strawberries and apples.

**Plant sterols or stanols:** These natural substances help block the body's absorption of cholesterol. **Good sources:** fruits and vegetables. Foods that have been fortified with sterols and stanols, such as margarines and orange juice, can help reduce LDL cholesterol.



## A Diet That's Recommended

The TLC Diet, short for Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes Diet, is recommended by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to lower bad cholesterol (LDL). **For more info:** Check the NHLBI's Web site at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov) (search TLC Diet).

## 5 Steps to Low-Cholesterol Eating

- STEP 1** **Avoid high-cholesterol foods ...** organ meats, egg yolks and whole-milk dairy products. Favor fish instead of meat a couple of times per week, try egg substitutes and choose low-fat dairy products.
- STEP 2** **Eat whole-wheat pastas, rices and breads ...** they help lower bad LDL cholesterol and promote heart health.
- STEP 3** **Load up on fruits and vegetables ...** they're essential to cholesterol control. About half of your overall diet should consist of fruits and vegetables.
- STEP 4** **Choose healthier fats ...** saturated fats and trans fats raise your total cholesterol and LDL levels. Unsaturated fats are healthier. Look for the terms monounsaturated and polyunsaturated on labels.
- STEP 5** **Eat heart-healthy fish ...** some types of fish — such as cod, tuna and halibut — have less total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol than do meats and poultry. Salmon, mackerel and herring are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

