

Foods to Choose to Lower Your Cholesterol

Here are steps for using your diet to lower cholesterol.

Did you know you can lower your cholesterol by making changes to your diet? Eating more lean protein, whole grains, fruits and vegetables can help lower your cholesterol by 25% or more. Below is a list of heart-healthy foods proven to lower your cholesterol.

Get more soluble fiber.

What is soluble fiber?

Soluble fiber is soft and sticky, and absorbs water to form a gel-like substance inside the digestive system. Soluble fiber helps soften stool so it can slide through the GI tract more easily.

How can it help?

Fiber is an important part of your diet as you age. Aim to eat more soluble fiber, like that found in oatmeal and fruits. This type of fiber can lower blood cholesterol levels when eaten as part of a heart- healthy diet.

Include plant sterols and stanols in your diet.

What are plant sterols, stanols, sterinols?

Plant stanols, sterols and sterinols are types of plant-based compounds that are similar to cholesterol in structure. They are found in an increasing number of food products such as spreads, juices, and yogurts. When you consume foods containing these substances, they work by interfering with the absorption of cholesterol in our body.

How can it help?

Because they block the absorption of cholesterol that enter your bloodstream, they help lower your low-density lipoprotein (bad) cholesterol levels and decrease your risk of heart disease. Think of them as natural defenders for your heart!

Stick with unsaturated fats and avoid saturated and trans fats.

What is unsaturated fat?

Also known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, unsaturated fats contain a high proportion of fatty acid molecules with at least one double bond. They are considered to be healthier in the diet than saturated fat (olive oil, salmon, almonds, natural peanut butter, avocados).

What is saturated fat?

Often called "solid fats", as they are solid at room temperature. Saturated fats are found naturally in animal-based foods (beef, lard, full-fat dairy products), and tropical fats (coconut and palm oil). It is best to limit intake to 5% of total daily caloric intake to maintain a healthy heart.

What is trans-fat?

Another term for trans-fat is trans-fatty acids. Along with saturated fat, trans fat raises LDL cholesterol, leading to heart disease. The primary dietary source for trans fats in processed food is "partially hydrogenated oils". Look for this term on the ingredient list in food packages and limit consumption of these.

How can it help?

Eating foods with healthy unsaturated fats such as oily fish, nuts, seeds, olives, and avocados will help to lower bad (LDL) cholesterol and raise good (HDL) cholesterol. But be careful of eating too many foods high in saturated fat, which is found in many meat and dairy products. And remember to stay away from products that include trans fats like fast, deep fried and processed foods.

Start a nutrition plan.

Start by talking to your doctor about which foods are right for you. They can offer guidance on how to make healthy changes to your diet. If you're considering significant changes to your diet, such as starting a new weight loss plan or taking supplements, it's a good idea to talk with your doctor first to make sure the change is safe and appropriate for your individual needs.

How can it help?

By tailoring your dietary intake to your unique needs and goals, you can improve your overall health, better manage specific health conditions, and increase your likelihood of sticking to it.

Your Heart Healthy Grocery Shopping List

Unsaturated fats

Olives

Green, black, Kalamata olives are all great additions to your salad or snack. Find them in a jar or can at the grocery store.

Nuts

All nuts are a great source of healthy fat/fiber/protein
Bonus: walnuts have a higher source of unsaturated fats than other nuts

Fatty fish

Salmon, mackerel, herring, tuna, and anchovies are all great choices. Try cooking it by grilling, baking, or poaching.

Certain oils

Switch out butter or margarine for olive, canola, vegetable, safflower, corn and soybean oils.

Eggs

Enjoy eggs any way (yes - with the yolk!) as it provides healthy unsaturated fats and beneficial nutrients.

Dark Chocolate

low to moderate amounts has been considered healthy.

Soluble fiber

Whole Grains

Oats, brown or wild rice, popcorn, quinoa, whole wheat, and whole grain rye.

Vegetable Sources

Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, sweet potatoes, avocados, asparagus, onions, kale, and collard greens.

Beans and Legumes

Beans, peas and lentils are all potent sources of fiber. Incorporate them into your soups, salads and entrees, or even as a dip for snacking.

Fruits

Apples, and pears are high in fiber readily available all year at modest cost.

Oranges and other citrus fruits are high in soluble fiber, and so are berries, figs and dates.

Seeds

Pumpkin, sunflower, flaxseed and chia seeds. can be added to oatmeal, baked goods, and smoothies.

Plant sterols & stanols

Foods with Plant Sterols

Sesame oil, wheat germ oil, mayonnaise, pistachio nuts, olive oil, sage, oregano, thyme, paprika, cocoa butter oil, almond butter, sesame seeds, macadamia nuts.

Foods with Plant Stanols:

Rice bran, wheat germ, oat bran, bran, whole wheat, brown rice, legumes, dried peas, dried beans, lentils, peanuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans, sunflower, pumpkin and sesame seeds. Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, dill, apples, avocados, tomato, vegetable oil, blueberries.

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