



How Can I Improve My Cholesterol?

There are several lifestyle changes that you can make to improve your cholesterol. You can eat healthy foods, reach and maintain a healthy weight and be physically active. Some people also need to take medicine to lower their cholesterol because changing their lifestyle and diet isn't enough. Your healthcare providers will help you set up a plan for improving your cholesterol — and keeping yourself healthy!

Most heart and blood vessel disease is caused by a buildup of cholesterol, plaque and other fatty deposits in artery walls. The arteries that feed the heart can become so clogged that the blood flow is reduced, causing chest pain. If a blood clot forms and blocks the artery, a heart attack can occur. Similarly, if a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.



Cholesterol can join with fats and other substances in your blood to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced.

What should I eat?

Focus on eating foods low in saturated and *trans* fats such as:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables.
- A variety of whole grain foods like whole grain bread, cereal, pasta and brown rice. (At least half of the servings should be whole grains.)
- Fat-free, 1 percent and low-fat milk products.
- Poultry without skin and lean meats. When you choose to eat red meat and pork, select options labeled “loin” and “round.” These cuts usually have the least amount of fat.
- Fatty fish such as salmon, trout, albacore tuna and sardines. (Enjoy at least two servings baked or grilled each week.)
- Unsalted nuts, seeds, and legumes (dried beans or peas).
- Nontropical vegetable oils like canola, corn, olive, or safflower oils.

What should I limit?

- Foods with a lot of sodium (salt)
- Sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages
- Red meats and fatty meats that aren't trimmed
- Meats that have been processed with a lot of sodium
- Full-fat dairy products such as whole milk, cream, ice cream, butter, and cheese
- Baked goods made with saturated and *trans* fats like donuts, cakes cookies
- Foods that list the words “hydrogenated oils” in the ingredients panel
- Saturated oils like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil
- Solid fats like shortening, stick margarine and lard
- Fried foods

(continued)



What are some cooking tips for me?

- Add a variety of fruits and vegetables to your meals.
- Use a rack to drain off fat when you broil, roast or bake poultry and meats.
- Look for leaner cuts if you choose to eat meat.
- Don't baste with drippings; use wine, fruit juice or marinade.
- Broil or grill instead of pan-frying.
- Cut off all visible fat from meat before cooking, and take all the skin off poultry pieces.
- Use a vegetable oil spray to brown or sauté foods.
- Serve smaller portions of higher-calorie dishes.
- Use low-fat, low-sodium options instead of regular cheese.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

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

For example:

What about eating out?

Why are weight control and physical activity important?

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** to learn more.



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Low-Fat/Low Cholesterol Diet

If you have any questions please call the dietitian for further information.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Meat/Meat substitute 6 oz or less/day	Lean cuts/well trimmed beef, pork, lamb; e.g., loin, round, select grade	Fatty cuts of beef, pork, lamb, regular ground beef, spare ribs, organ meats
	Poultry without skin	
	Fish, shellfish (without butter)	
	Processed meat prepared from lean meats, e.g., lean ham, lean frankfurters, lean meat with soy protein	
	Dry beans and peas	
	Tofu, tempeh; low-fat or nonfat meat analogs	
Eggs 2 or less yolks/week (3 if egg is fortified with omega-3 fats)	Egg whites (2 whites can substituted for one whole egg in recipes), cholesterol free egg substitute	Egg yolks (more than 2/week); includes eggs used in cooking and baking
Dairy products	Milk: skim, or 1% (fluid, powdered, evaporated), butter milk	Whole milk (fluid, evaporated, condensed), 2% fat milk
	Yogurt: nonfat or low-fat yogurt or yogurt beverage	Whole-milk yogurt, whole-milk yogurt beverages
	Soy or rice beverages--1% or nonfat	

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
	Cheese: low-fat natural, processed or soy cheese with < 3g fat per serving	Regular cheeses (American, blue, Brie, cheddar, Colby, Edam, Monterey Jack, whole-milk mozzarella, Parmesan, Neufchatel cheese)
	Other low-fat or nonfat varieties, (e.g. low-fat, nonfat, or dry curd, 0-2% fat cottage cheese)	
	Frozen dairy dessert: low-fat or nonfat ice cream and frozen yogurt	Regular ice cream, premium frozen yogurt
	Low-fat or nonfat coffee creamer and sour cream	Cream, half and half, whipping cream, nondairy creamer, whipped topping, sour cream
Fats and Oils 6 tsp/day or less	Unsaturated oils: Olive, Canola, Peanut, Soybean	Coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and palm oil
	Margarine: made from oils listed above, light or diet margarine, especially soft or liquid forms. Use those with no trans fatty acids.	Butter, lard, shortening, bacon fat, stick margarine, margarine high in trans fats
	Salad dressings made with unsaturated oils listed above or low-fat/fat-free varieties	
	Seeds and Nuts: Natural peanut butter (2 T)	Coconut, peanut butter with hydrogenated fat added
	Cocoa powder	Milk chocolate
Breads, cereals, rice and pasta 6 or more servings/day	Breads with 2 g of fiber or more: whole grain, English muffins, bagels, buns, corn and flour tortillas	Breads in which eggs, fat and/or butter are a major ingredient, croissants, tortillas with lard
	Cereals: oat, wheat, corn, multigrain	Most granolas
	Whole wheat pasta	White pasta
	Brown rice	White rice
	Crackers: low-fat animal, graham, soda, bread sticks, melba toast, crackers with , 2g fat per serving and 2g fiber	High fat crackers, foods made with Olestra should be used with caution
	Homemade baked goods using unsaturated oils, skim or 1% milk, and egg	Commercially baked pastries, biscuits

	substitute--Quick breads, biscuits, cornbread muffins, bran muffins, pancakes, waffles	
Soups	Reduced or low-fat varieties, e.g. chicken or beef noodle, minestrone, tomato, vegetable, potato; reduced-fat soups made with skim milk--watch the out for the sodium in canned soups!	Soups containing whole milk, cream, meat fat, poultry fat, or poultry skin
Vegetables 3-5 servings/day	Fresh, frozen, without added fat or salt	Vegetables fried or prepared with butter, cheese, or cream sauce
Fruits 2-4 servings/day	Fresh, frozen, canned (in natural juice) or dried	Fried fruit or fruit served with butter or cream sauce; avocados; olives
	Fruit juice: fresh frozen, frozen, canned	
Sweets and Modified fat desserts	Beverages: water, 100% juice, decaf tea	
	Sweets: syrup, Turbinado sugar, honey, jam, preserves, fruit-flavored gelatin	Candy made with milk chocolate, chocolate, coconut oil, palm kernel oil, palm oil
	Frozen desserts: low-fat and nonfat yogurt, low-fat and nonfat ice cream, sherbet, sorbet, fruit ice, popsicles	Ice cream and frozen treats made with regular ice cream
	Cookies, cake, pie, pudding- prepared with egg whites, egg substitute, skim milk or 1 % milk and unsaturated oil; ginger snaps; fig and other fruit bar cookies; fat-free cookies; angel food cake; desserts with , 3g fat /serving ❖ If triglycerides are above normal avoid all of the above	Commercially baked pies, cakes, doughnuts, high-fat cookies, cream pies