

Mission In Motion

Health & Wellness Monthly Newsletter
September 2012—Cholesterol



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Cholesterol levels: What numbers should you aim for?

Figuring out the best cholesterol levels to aim for can be confusing. But here's some help setting your cholesterol number targets.

It's important to keep your cholesterol levels within healthy limits. And if you have other risk factors for developing heart disease, you need to be even more careful — especially with your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad," cholesterol level.

Interpreting your cholesterol numbers

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood in the United States and some other countries. Canada and most European countries measure cholesterol in millimoles (mmol) per liter (L) of blood. Consider these general guidelines when you get your cholesterol test (lipid panel or lipid profile) results back to see if your cholesterol falls in an ideal range.

Total cholesterol		<i>By: Mayo Clinic</i>
U.S. and some other countries	Canada and most of Europe	
Below 200 mg/dL	Below 5.2 mmol/L	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	5.2-6.2 mmol/L	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	Above 6.2 mmol/L	High

Cholesterol Myths

Cholesterol can be both good and bad. That's why it's important to learn the facts about cholesterol, how it can affect your health and how to manage your blood cholesterol levels.

Beware of the following misconceptions about cholesterol:

- Choices about diet and physical activity are the only contributors to cholesterol levels
- Using margarine instead of butter will lower cholesterol
- Taking medication for high cholesterol means not having to worry about what you eat
- High cholesterol is only a man's problem
- You don't have to have cholesterol checked until you reach middle age

Source: American Heart Association

Cholesterol: Top 5 foods to lower your numbers

Diet can play an important role in lowering your cholesterol. Here are five foods that can lower your cholesterol and protect your heart.

Can a bowl of oatmeal help lower your cholesterol? How about a handful of walnuts or even a baked potato topped with some heart-healthy margarine? A few simple tweaks to your diet — like these, along with exercise and other heart-healthy habits — may be helpful in lowering your cholesterol.

1. Oatmeal, oat bran and high-fiber foods

Oatmeal contains soluble fiber, which reduces your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), the "bad," cholesterol. Soluble fiber is also found in such foods as kidney beans, apples, pears, barley and prunes.

Soluble fiber can reduce the absorption of cholesterol into your bloodstream. Five to 10 grams or more of soluble fiber a day decreases your total and LDL cholesterol. Eating 1 1/2 cups of cooked oatmeal provides 6 grams of fiber. If you add fruit, such as bananas, you'll add about 4 more grams of fiber. To mix it up a little, try steel-cut oatmeal or cold cereal made with oatmeal or oat bran.

2. Fish and omega-3 fatty acids

Eating fatty fish can be heart healthy because of its high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce your blood pressure and risk of developing blood clots. In people who have already had heart attacks, fish oil — or omega-3 fatty acids — reduces the risk of sudden death.

The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish a week. The highest levels of omega-3

fatty acids are in:

- Mackerel
- Lake trout
- Herring
- Sardines
- Albacore tuna
- Salmon
- Halibut

You should bake or grill the fish to avoid adding unhealthy fats. If you don't like fish, you can also get small amounts of omega-3 fatty acids from foods like ground flaxseed or canola oil.

You can take an omega-3 or fish oil supplement to get some of the benefits, but you won't get other nutrients in fish, such as selenium. If you decide to take a supplement, just remember to watch your diet and eat lean meat or vegetables in place of fish.

3. Walnuts, almonds and other nuts

Walnuts, almonds and other nuts can reduce blood cholesterol. Rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids, walnuts also help keep blood vessels healthy.

Eating about a handful (1.5 ounces, or 42.5 grams) a day of most nuts, such as almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, some pine nuts, pistachio nuts and walnuts, may reduce your risk of heart disease. Just make sure the nuts you eat aren't salted or coated with sugar.

All nuts are high in calories, so a handful will do. To avoid eating too many nuts and gaining weight, replace foods high in saturated fat with nuts. For example, instead of using cheese, meat or croutons in your salad, add a handful of walnuts or almonds.

4. Olive oil

Olive oil contains a potent mix of antioxi-

dants that can lower your "bad" (LDL) cholesterol but leave your "good" (HDL) cholesterol untouched.

Try using about 2 tablespoons (23 grams) of olive oil a day in place of other fats in your diet to get its heart-healthy benefits. To add olive oil to your diet, you can sauté vegetables in it, add it to a marinade or mix it with vinegar as a salad dressing. You can also use olive oil as a substitute for butter when basting meat or as a dip for bread. Olive oil is high in calories, so don't eat more than the recommended amount.

The cholesterol-lowering effects of olive oil are even greater if you choose extra-virgin olive oil, meaning the oil is less processed and contains more heart-healthy antioxidants. But keep in mind that "light" olive oils are usually more processed than extra-virgin or virgin olive oils and are lighter in color, not fat or calories.

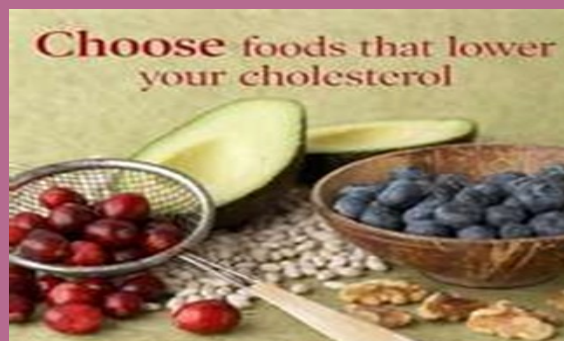
5. Foods with added plant sterols or stanols

Foods are now available that have been fortified with sterols or stanols — substances found in plants that help block the absorption of cholesterol.

Margarines, orange juice and yogurt drinks with added plant sterols can help reduce LDL cholesterol by more than 10 percent. The amount of daily plant sterols needed for results is at least 2 grams — which equals about two 8-ounce (237-milliliter) servings of plant sterol-fortified orange juice a day.

Plant sterols or stanols in fortified foods don't appear to affect levels of triglycerides or of high-density lipoprotein (HDL), the "good" cholesterol.

By Mayo Clinic





A well-oiled plan
to avoid trans fats



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3 Cholesterol Tips

A well-oiled plan to avoid trans fats

Checked your oil lately? While a small amount of the trans-fat we eat is found naturally in animal foods, the majority of the trans-fat in our diet comes from the addition of hydrogen to liquid oils, making them more solid—the process called hydrogenation. The consumption of trans-fat and saturated fat raises low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol—also known as “bad cholesterol” and increases your risk of heart disease.

To keep your engine running smoothly:

- Choose liquid vegetable oils that are high in unsaturated fats, such as canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, sesame, soybean and sunflower oils.
- Buy margarine made with unsaturated liquid vegetable oils as the first ingredient. Choose soft tub or liquid margarine or vegetable oil spreads.
- Limit butter, lard, fatback and solid shortenings. They are high in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Buy light or nonfat mayonnaise and salad dressing instead of the regular kinds which are high in fat. For example, two tablespoons of regular Italian dressing can add as many as 14 grams of fat.

Keep your health in high gear by creating a nutrition plan with *Eat Right*, one of the many wellness tools available through the Personal Health Manager. Find this and other helpful resources by visiting Blue Access® for Members at www.bcbstx.com.

Source: National Heart Blood and Lung Institute



1. Are you looking for HDL cholesterol (the “good” cholesterol) on food labels? You won’t find it there—no food contains it. HDL is made in your liver and is found in your bloodstream.

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter

2. They look tempting in their pretty wrappers but what’s inside many pre-packaged snacks can harm your health. Many foods marketed as low-fat or fat-free can be high in calories, and even cholesterol-free snacks can still have too much fat, saturated fat and sugar. Try to aim for snacks with percent daily values close to five percent for fat, sugar or sodium. Check the label on the wrapper and see what you’re really getting. After all, it’s what’s inside your snack—and you—that counts.

Source: Mayo Clinic Online Resources

3. Here’s how to increase the levels of HDL—the so-called “good”—cholesterol in your blood:
 - ◆ Lose some weight if you’re overweight
 - ◆ Exercise more
 - ◆ Cut down on saturated fat
 - ◆ Eat more soluble fiber (that’s found in oats, beans, fruits, vegetables)
 - ◆ Include fish in your diet
 - ◆ Don’t smoke

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness



WELLNESS

2012 Open Enrollment Make-Up Session

Date: Friday, September 7, 2012 **Time:** 8:00am to 2:00pm

Location: Central Fire Station

Benefit re-enrollments, cancellations, changes, & updates must be made no later than September 18, 2012 & will become effective on October 1, 2012

Dilled Shrimp Salad on Lettuce Leaves

By Mayo Clinic staff Serves 2

Ingredients

2 cups uncooked farfalle (bow tie) pasta	4 fresh asparagus stalks, cut 1/2-in stalks
1/4 cup reduced-fat salad dressing	1 1/2 teaspoons fresh dill
1/2 pound cooked shrimp	5 to 8 cherry tomatoes, halved
4 scallions or green onions, diced	4 cups watercress (or any salad greens)

Directions

Fill a large pot 3/4 full with water and bring to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente (tender), 10 to 12 minutes, or according to the package directions. Drain the pasta thoroughly and rinse under cold water.

In a small saucepan, cover the asparagus with water. Bring to a boil and cook only until tender-crisp, about 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water.

In a small bowl, add the salad dressing and dill. Whisk to mix evenly.

In a large bowl, add the pasta, asparagus, shrimp, tomatoes and scallions. Add the salad dressing mixture and toss to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, about 1 hour.

To serve, divide the watercress among the plates. Top with dilled salad and serve.

Upcoming Monthly Health Wellness Seminars:

October 2012—Breast Cancer Awareness

November 2012—Diabetes

December 2012—Alcohol/Drug Abuse

(All topics subject to change)

*If you have a subject or topic that you would like more information on, feel free to make your requests at 956-580-8630.

2012 Annual Health Fair

Free Flu Shots, Lab/Blood Tests, Cholesterol, Blood Pressure exams, etc. You don't want to miss it!

Details coming soon!

Wellness Scramble

Unscramble the letters of these words. Look for the answer next month.

mbreace ahelthy hagnces

August Answer:

Active for life

Mission In Motion

Our mission is to promote health awareness and to encourage healthy lifestyles.

Human Resources Department

1201 E. 8th Street

Mission, TX 78572

956-580-8631

Noemi Munguia—Human Resources Director

Romie Palomo—Benefits Coordinator

Elena Perez—Personnel Manager

Vicky Ortiz—Insurance Benefits Specialist

