



Eat right to lower blood cholesterol

At my last check-up, my blood cholesterol level was higher than usual. What foods could I eat to lower my LDLs and increase my HDLs?

The first thing to do is to examine your diet overall and make sure you're not consuming too much fat, particularly saturated fat. Saturated fat should be limited to 7 to 10 percent of total calories, with total fat (including beneficial unsaturated fats) limited to 30 percent of total calories. To find out what this means for your food choices, see <http://www.mypyramid.gov> and click on "Get a Personalized Plan."

You can likely trim your intake of saturated fat by cutting back on baked goods (including cookies, quick breads, muffins and similar items), fried foods, full-fat dairy products (especially cheese and ice cream), as well as fatty cuts of red meats and poultry with skin.

Trans fats also deserve attention. According to a 2006 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the risk of coronary heart disease increases by 23 percent for every extra 2 percent of calories from trans fat a day. Trans fat gives the body a double-whammy because not only does it increase the "bad" LDLs (the type of cholesterol responsible for narrowing of the arteries), it also decreases "good" HDLs (the type of cholesterol that sweeps up LDLs, taking them out of the bloodstream and back to the liver).

That said, you are right in thinking that some foods are particularly good at improving your cholesterol profile.

They include:

- Walnuts, almonds and other nuts. Walnuts especially appear to benefit blood cholesterol.
- Oatmeal and other foods high in soluble fiber, including apples, barley and kidney beans.
- Salmon, lake trout, mackerel, and other fish high in omega-3 fatty acids.
- Vegetable oils rich in polyunsaturated fats, such as corn, safflower, canola, sunflower and soybean oil.

Research is mixed on whether flaxseed or its oil lowers cholesterol. According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), a 2009 review of research found that the benefits of flaxseed were more apparent in postmenopausal women and in people with high initial cholesterol levels. In addition, the NCCAM recently reported that a University of Kentucky study indicates that green and black tea may reduce blood cholesterol levels, while, on the other hand, a Stanford University study indicates that garlic does not have an effect on cholesterol.

In terms of increasing HDL, some lifestyle factors may be important. Add exercise to your daily habit. And definitely do not smoke.

For information about what to do about high cholesterol levels, download "Your Guide to Lowering Your Cholesterol with TLC" from the National Institutes of Health at <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/cholmonth/>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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