



Choose right foods to reduce cholesterol

I saw your column on oatmeal and how it can lower cholesterol. Are there other foods that do the same?

Yes, many foods appear to reduce blood cholesterol. Overall, the best route to take is to follow a basic heart-healthy diet — low in saturated fat, trans-fatty acids and cholesterol while high in fiber and omega-3 and monounsaturated fats.

Remember, though, that high blood cholesterol is a medical condition, so be sure to talk with your doctor if you change your diet substantially in an attempt to control it. The idea is to do what you can to lower “bad” cholesterol (low-density lipoproteins, or LDLs) and increase “good” cholesterol (high-density lipoproteins, or HDLs).

Oatmeal is often touted for its cholesterol-lowering abilities because of its high level of soluble fiber. One to two ounces of oat bran a day can reduce cholesterol by as much as 10 percent to 15 percent. Other rich sources of soluble fiber include beans, barley, prunes, citrus fruits, apples, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, apricots and psyllium.

Soy protein also appears to help. About an ounce a day (four 6.25-gram servings) can reduce LDLs by as much as 10 percent. A cup of tofu contains anywhere from 9 to 20 grams of soy protein; soy milk usually ranges from 6 to 10 grams a cup. Check labels for soy protein content information.

Choosing certain types of fats over others can also help. Oils high in monounsaturated (olive, canola, peanut) or polyunsaturated (corn, soybean, safflower) fats tend to lower LDLs and raise HDLs, while saturated fat raises both types of cholesterol, and trans fats raise LDLs and lower HDLs.

Incorporating more omega-3 fatty acids, found especially in salmon and other high-fat fish, help increase HDLs. Some types of nuts also seem to be good choices. Walnuts have a high amount of alpha-linoleic acid — a type of omega-3 fatty acid — that increases HDLs and reduces LDLs. Almonds have monounsaturated fat and fiber that can do the trick, too. But nuts also pack a lot of calories, so be sure to replace other foods with them instead of just adding them to your daily diet.

In addition, foods containing high amounts of plant sterols and stanols can lower LDLs. They are naturally present in small amounts in plant cell membranes, but some types of margarine are specially made with higher amounts. Studies say that one gram a day — contained in about two tablespoons of these spreads — can lower cholesterol by up to 14 percent.

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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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
Nov. 19, 2006**

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