

Smart Eating Can Lower Cholesterol - Part 1

Many regular foods have fat-busting powers that can help maintain a healthy balance in your cholesterol levels. Some fruits and vegetables, for example, guard against fat oxidation, a bodily process that causes fats to break down and in turn cause damage to arteries. Make these a part of your daily menus:

- Fruits - Apricots and mangoes are rich in fiber and beta-carotene, a nutrient that helps guard against fat oxidation.
- Yellow vegetables - Yellow squash and sweet potatoes also contain beta-carotene to help prevent fat oxidation.
- Beans and legumes - Kidney beans, chickpeas, and green beans contain a type of polyunsaturated fat that can guard against high cholesterol.

Smart Eating Can Lower Cholesterol - Part 2

Last week we looked at fruits and vegetables that can help balance the cholesterol in your body. This week, we'll list some fish and nuts, which contain healthy fats that can help lower LDL levels and balance your overall cholesterol reading.

- Fatty fish - Cold-water fish such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel contain omega-3 fatty acids that may help decrease LDL cholesterol. On the other hand, whitefish such as haddock, flounder, and sole contain only a small amount of this helpful substance.
- Nuts and seeds - Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts, and almonds get much of their fat from monounsaturates, the type that helps lower overall cholesterol levels while preserving the good cholesterol, HDL. Eat these in moderation, however, to keep your fat intake at modest levels.

Oats and whole grains are good sources of soluble fiber, which helps to lower both total and LDL cholesterol. We'll look at fiber in more detail next week.

Smart Eating Can Lower Cholesterol - Part 3

In Parts 1 and 2 of this series, we've reviewed a number of foods which can help balance your body's cholesterol levels. Another helpful one is soluble fiber such as that found in oats and whole grains, which helps to lower both total cholesterol and LDL levels. It works by binding to the bile acids in the intestine, which contain cholesterol, excreting them before they can release the cholesterol.

To lower LDL cholesterol 5 to 10%, you need at least 15 grams of soluble fiber a day. Here are some whole grains to help you get it:

- Whole-wheat bread
- Whole-grain rye, barley, and oat bread
- Popcorn
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain breakfast cereal
- Oatmeal
- Wheat germ
- Whole-grain pasta
- Bran
- Whole-wheat pancakes
- Kasha
- Couscous
- Bulgar

Sources: Nature's amazing cholesterol busters. Prevention, 2000. Whole grains protect against stroke. Heart Watch, December 2000.