

Eat Right, Eat Smart

A Guide to Eating Healthy and Making Good Decisions

With a little planning, you can follow a diet that allows you to enjoy many of your favorite foods while lowering your cholesterol.

Managing high cholesterol is one way to help slow the progression of a disease called atherosclerosis (athero for short), the progressive buildup of plaque in the arteries. And one of the first steps in a cholesterol management plan is making diet changes. While many people find that changing a lifetime of eating habits isn't easy — especially when there's little time to prepare healthy meals and junk food is everywhere — there are simple things you can do.

Snack Facts

One area you might want to think about modifying is snacking. Many snacks are high in saturated fat and trans fatty acids, which can increase your cholesterol. But eating a cholesterol-friendly diet doesn't mean



you have to give up snacking entirely. See the chart below for snacking ideas and low-cholesterol ingredients.

At-a-Glance	Use this chart as a quick reminder of what snacks and foods are acceptable in a cholesterol-lowering, athero-friendly diet
TYPE OF FOOD	FOODS ALLOWED
Milk and Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Skim or 1% milk (liquid, dry, or evaporated)▪ Nonfat or low-fat yogurt▪ Low-fat cottage cheese (1% to 2%)▪ Low-fat cheese (labeled no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce)
Fish, Meat, and Poultry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Fish▪ Tuna packed in water▪ Poultry without skin, baked, broiled, boiled, or roasted▪ Lean, well-trimmed beef, lamb, pork, or veal
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 2 or fewer egg yolks/week▪ Whites (2 whites = 1 whole egg in recipes)▪ Cholesterol-free egg substitutes

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TYPE OF FOOD	FOODS ALLOWED
Breads and Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole-grain breads ▪ Pasta ▪ Rice ▪ Homemade baked goods using vegetable oils sparingly and with no egg yolks or whole milk
Fats and Oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unsaturated vegetable oils such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rapeseed (canola) - Sesame - Soybean - Sunflower - Olive ▪ Margarines made from one of the above oils ▪ Mayonnaise or salad dressing made from one of the above oils
Seeds and Nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tend to be high in fat, but the fat is usually unsaturated. Intake should be limited, mainly because of calories
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fruits and fruit ices ▪ Sherbet ▪ Angel food cake ▪ Gelatin ▪ Low-fat yogurt, frozen low-fat yogurt ▪ Cakes, cookies, and muffins made with fat- and cholesterol-modifying recipes
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graham crackers ▪ Rye crisp ▪ Melba toast ▪ Soda crackers ▪ Bagels ▪ English muffins ▪ Fruits and vegetables ▪ Ready-to-eat cereals ▪ Air-popped popcorn

How to Read a Food Label

Learning how to read food labels may be one of the most important cholesterol management steps you can take. Most — if not all — of the details of what the product contains can be found simply by turning to the back of a package and reading the information.

Food labels may seem confusing at first, but remember, they are all set up the same way. Read more below about seven important numbers from a typical food label and what they mean for you.

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Serving Size: All the information on the label is based on one serving. Even a small package may contain several servings.

Calories: Your daily intake of calories should be just enough to help maintain a desirable weight. On average, women should consume about 1,800 calories daily, while men should consume about 2,500 calories daily.

Total Fat: Try to keep your daily intake of total fat to about 30% of your calories. That’s an average of 3 grams of fat for every 100 calories.

Saturated Fat: Commonly found in animal products, including fatty meat and dairy products, as well as in coconut and palm oils. Remember that less than 7% of your daily calories should come from saturated fat.

Trans Fat: Food labels also list the amount of trans fat. It’s commonly found in vegetable shortening, snack foods, and commercial baked goods like cookies and crackers.

Cholesterol: For a healthy diet, try to keep the amount of cholesterol in the foods you eat to under 200 milligrams per day.

Dietary (Soluble) Fiber: Try to eat 20 to 30 grams of dietary fiber per day. Some sources are peas, beans, and apples. To calculate how much soluble fiber you eat, multiply the number of servings of soluble fiber by the number of grams in each serving.

Back to Basics

If your cholesterol level is too high, your doctor or nutritionist may recommend the Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) diet, developed by the National Institutes of Health. The TLC diet is a low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol eating plan that recommends that

- Less than 7% of calories come from saturated fat
- Dietary cholesterol be limited to less than 200 mg per day
- You consume only enough calories to maintain a desirable weight and to avoid weight gain

If you follow these dietary guidelines and your cholesterol is not lowered enough, you can try increasing the amount of dietary (soluble) fiber in your diet. Certain food products, such as cholesterol-lowering margarines and other products, can be added to the TLC diet to boost its cholesterol-lowering power.

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Sizing Up Portions

Another frequent trouble spot for people who are concerned about cholesterol and atherosclerosis is portion size, even when eating low-fat foods. Judging serving sizes is a learned skill. To get an idea of what a serving size looks like, consider these everyday equivalents.

SERVING SIZE OF FOOD	EVERYDAY EQUIVALENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3 ounces of chicken or beef ■ ½ cup of cooked pasta ■ 1½ ounces of hard cheese ■ 1 medium piece of fruit ■ 1 teaspoon of margarine ■ 2 tablespoons of peanut butter ■ 1 pancake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A deck of cards ■ 1/2 baseball ■ 4 stacked dice ■ A baseball ■ A die ■ Ping-pong ball ■ A compact disc

Remember, while diet should be a part of every cholesterol management plan, sometimes it's just not enough. That's when it may be time to make an appointment with your doctor to find out if a cholesterol-lowering medication might be right for you.

Suggested Reading and Resources

If you are looking for more information on how to manage your cholesterol through a healthy diet, the following resources may be helpful.

Eating Out: Your Pocket Guide to Healthy Dining
Mayo Clinic Nutritionists

This handy reference guide is small enough to fit in your pocket and will help you make good, healthy selections from the menu when dining at a restaurant. Available through Barnes & Noble.

Total Nutrition: The Only Guide You'll Ever Need
Victor Herbert and Genell J. Subak-Sharpe
St. Martin's Press, 1995

This book draws on the experience of more than 50 health professionals from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. It examines the basics of good nutrition, breaks down nutritional needs according to age, and analyzes the role nutrition plays in fighting common diseases. Available through Barnes & Noble.