

Lowering Cholesterol with Diet and Exercise

When it comes to creating an appropriate nutrition plan to lower cholesterol it is important to be brutally honest about the difference between what tastes good and what's good for you.

"It's very hard with our Western diet first of all, we eat a lot. There's a lot of unhealthy foods and products out there, and most people believe it tastes good, it's very hard to control that."

"And people just love the big hamburger and all the dripping fat and so forth, it's just, probably, it's tasty, fat is tasty, it's locked in your diet as much as anything."

The hard truth is eating healthier foods is extremely important when attempting to improve cholesterol levels and decrease your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Here are some additional tips from the American Heart Association:

Choose a healthy dietary pattern which includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Include low-fat dairy products (such as skim milk and low fat yogurt).

Opt for skinless poultry, fish, legumes, and nuts and prepare them without added saturated fat and sodium.

Choose non-tropical vegetable oils when cooking.

Limit intake of sweets and sugar sweetened beverages, and red meat.

Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Try to eat less than 1500 milligrams of sodium per day. It may be surprising to know how much salt is in some foods. Check labels to keep track of your sodium intake.

"I think when you eat better, you feel better."

And getting regular exercise not only burns calories but helps the entire cardiovascular system in the fight against high cholesterol levels.

Being overweight often tends to increase the LDL, bad cholesterol levels, and lowers HDL, good cholesterol levels.

"I think learning how to eat appropriately is important because whatever you eat that's excessive and you don't burn off you're going to store, and your body stores it as fat."

"The regular aerobic activity tends to lower the blood pressure some, it tends to make the triglycerides better we've mention, it will help LDL cholesterol and total cholesterol, and long term it will help the HDL, the good cholesterol. So, we have many benefits of exercise."

Here are some tips from the American Heart Association to help you get moving:

Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Start slowly, then build up to at least 20 to 30 minutes of exercise each day. In general, if your healthcare

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provider has said that you would benefit from reducing your cholesterol, aim for 40 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity at least 3 to 4 times a week.

Then build up to at least 150 minutes per week. You can do this in as little as 10 to 15 minute blocks throughout the week.

Try to exercise at the same time every day so it becomes a regular part of your routine.

Ask family or friends to join you. You're more likely to stick to it if you have company.

Look for chances to be more active during the day, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Take 15 minute breaks while watching TV to move around.

Don't get discouraged if you stop for a while. Get started again and gradually build back up to 40 minutes a day, at least three days a week. Walking is a great way to get started.

Always speak to your physician before beginning an exercise program if you have or are experiencing symptoms of cardiovascular or other chronic diseases or if you have a specific medical question or concern.

The choice of appropriate types and amounts of physical activity can be affected by chronic conditions. People with symptoms or known chronic conditions should be under the regular care of a health-care provider. In consultation with their provider, they can develop a physical activity plan that is appropriate for them.