

Managing Cholesterol with Healthy Food Choices

Choosing healthy foods is key to managing your cholesterol.

Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs, so you don't need to eat more of it. A healthy eating plan includes as little cholesterol as possible.

Here are some tips to help lower your cholesterol with healthy food choices.

1. First, limit foods with saturated fat and trans fat. These can raise your LDL (or bad) cholesterol, leading to plaque buildup.

These unhealthy fats are found in: many processed and packaged foods, fatty and red meats, full-fat dairy products, baked goods, and fried foods.

Instead, choose foods with unsaturated fats. These healthy fats are found in: oils like sunflower, corn, olive, and canola; nuts like walnuts and almonds; fish; and avocados.

2. Eat plenty of fiber. Fiber helps reduce how much LDL cholesterol stays in your bloodstream. Add more fiber to your daily routine by eating more fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, and whole grains.

3. Eat foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids. These acids can help raise your HDL (or good) cholesterol and keep your heart healthy.

Foods that are high in omega-3s include: fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines; nuts and seeds; and plant oils like soybean or canola.

4. Limit the amount of sodium (or salt) that you eat. Limiting salt won't lower your cholesterol. But it can help lower your blood pressure, which will reduce your risk of heart disease.

Look for products labeled "low-sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no-salt added."

Try seasoning your food with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, or vinegar.

5. Lastly, remember to read food labels. Look on the label for foods low in saturated fat and trans fat, and high in fiber. And make sure you are eating the correct serving size.

Also keep in mind that some foods low in fat are actually high in sugar or sodium. So it's best to look at the whole food label to pick the healthiest choice for you.

Making these changes may be hard at first. But sticking with them over time will help you reach your cholesterol goals.