



## Six Tips to Lower Your Cholesterol

If you have a total blood cholesterol level that is borderline or high, here are six steps you can take to lower it:

1. **Cut Back on Fat in Your Diet**

Limit the fat in your daily diet. You can reduce fat by eating less fatty cuts of red meats and fewer foods prepared with animal fats and oils. Use fewer "added" fats, such as butter, margarine, salad dressings, mayonnaise and sauces. Avoid fried foods. Here's a good rule of thumb: make sure that no more than 30 percent of your daily calories are from fat.

2. **Know the Type of Fat You're Eating and Use Unsaturated Fats**

Saturated fat raises your blood cholesterol level more than anything else you eat, so replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats may help lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Saturated fats are those fats that are solid at room temperature. They raise serum cholesterol levels. You'll find them in animal products such as bacon, cold cuts, frankfurters, and even cheese and whole milk, as well as a few plant products, including coconut or palm oil.

Be aware of foods such as cookies, crackers and others that may contain palm or coconut oils on their ingredient list. Remember to read food labels! Unsaturated fats come in two forms: polyunsaturated and monounsaturated.

Safflower oil, sunflower oil, sesame oil, corn oil and fish are good sources of polyunsaturated fats. Polyunsaturated fats can help lower serum cholesterol levels.

Monounsaturated fats can be found in olive oil, peanut oil and canola oil. Research suggests these are also effective in lowering your cholesterol level.

3. **Eat More Carbohydrates and Dietary Fiber**

Choose foods high in complex carbohydrates (starch and fiber). Dietary fiber is that part of plant food that is not completely digested. As it passes through the intestines, it helps to eliminate unneeded fat and cholesterol.

Complex carbohydrates contain little or no saturated fat and no cholesterol. They include whole grain breads and cereals, oats, barley, brown rice, dry beans, and fruits and vegetables (especially those with skins).

4. **Eat Fewer High Cholesterol Foods**

You should limit your intake of foods high in cholesterol to less than 300 mg a day. Cholesterol is found in animal products such as egg yolks, meats (especially organs like liver and kidney), dairy products and some shellfish.

There is cholesterol in both high fat and low fat foods. Even if a food is low in fat, it can be high in cholesterol or vice versa. Make sure to read your food labels for content analysis on both fat and cholesterol. And double-check serving sizes.

5. **Exercise Regularly**

If you want to be your healthiest, you should aim for 20 minutes of aerobic activity at least three times a week. Aerobic exercise is a great way to increase your high-density lipoproteins (HDL) or "good cholesterol" level. And regular exercise can help you reduce stress, feel better and increase your energy.

Brisk walking, jogging, bicycling, rowing and aerobic dance are examples of aerobic activity that can help lower your blood cholesterol level.

6. **Know Your Optimal Weight and Maintain It**

Your weight and body fat are important because a high percentage of body fat can increase your susceptibility to heart disease. To find out your optimal body weight, or if you're interested in losing weight, talk to your health care provider. Together, you can determine if a weight loss or lifestyle change program would be appropriate.

**TAKE THESE STEPS AND TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH**

Make an action plan with the help of your physician. The important thing is to know your cholesterol score and make a change for the better in your lifestyle.

How much your blood cholesterol is lowered depends on how high it was to begin with and how consistently you maintain dietary and exercise guidelines.

For some people, heredity may be a major factor in high blood cholesterol levels. If this is your situation, modifying your lifestyle may not sufficiently lower your cholesterol. Your physician can determine if heredity is a factor and if medication is appropriate.

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