



LOW FAT / LOW CHOLESTEROL DIET

► What is Cholesterol?

High cholesterol levels in the blood can cause blockage of arteries, or atherosclerosis. This can lead to heart attack or stroke. Cholesterol in our bodies is made in the liver, and it is eaten in foods from animals such as meats, dairy products, eggs and animal fats. We do not need cholesterol in foods at all; our liver makes all the cholesterol we need.

► How Can I Control My Cholesterol?

Controlling the types and amounts of fat in your diet is the first step. These fats are the most harmful:

- Saturated fats raise blood cholesterol. They are found in meats, full-fat dairy products and fried foods. They are solid at room temperature. Some vegetable oils (palm, palm kernel, and coconut oil) are also high in saturated fat; they are used in store-bought baked goods, snacks, and non-dairy creamers.
- Hydrogenated fats, or trans-fats, are fats that have been chemically changed from unsaturated to saturated to preserve shelf life in store-bought foods. Some margarines, many frozen dinners, and most baked goods have an abundance of these fats. They are the worst culprits and should be avoided as much as possible.

These fats should be used in small amounts instead:

- Monounsaturated fats appear to lower blood cholesterol and are found in nuts and certain vegetable oils such as olive, canola, and peanut oil. These are liquid at room temperature.
- Polyunsaturated fats may lower blood cholesterol. These also come from vegetable oils, mainly corn, safflower, sesame, cottonseed, and soybean oil. Polyunsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature. They are also present in fatty fish such as tuna, salmon, trout, sardines and mackerel.

All fats, regardless of type, are high in calories. Thus, a low-fat diet also helps with weight control by cutting down on the most calorie-packed foods. Recommended fat intake is less than 30% of calories eaten per day or less than 60 grams per day.

► Make Changes in Your Diet

Red Meats:

- Eat lean cuts only. Trim off excess fat.
- Eat smaller portions (2-3 oz. cooked)—about the size of a deck of cards.
- Avoid organ meats (liver, kidneys, etc.).
- Avoid processed meats such as bacon, bologna, hot dogs, and salami.

Poultry:

- Remove all skin before cooking.
- Avoid processed poultry products such as bologna or hot dogs made from chicken or turkey.
- Avoid self-basting or ready-stuffed birds.

Fish:

- Choose fish that are high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel.

Eggs/Dairy:

- Have no more than 3-4 egg yolks per week. Substitute 2 egg whites for each whole egg in recipes.
- Drink nonfat or lowfat milk rather than whole milk.
- Choose low fat cheese and low fat or nonfat yogurt. Limit natural and processed cheeses (such as cheddar and American).





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Breads/Cereals:

- Eat a mix of whole grains for nutrients and fiber.
- Choose whole-grain breads instead of refined or enriched bread.
- Avoid bakery goods such as doughnuts and pastries.
- Avoid cereals made with saturated fats.

Fruits and vegetables:

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. These have little fat and no cholesterol, and they're a great source of fiber. Choose fruits for snacks and desserts.

► **Check Nutrition Labels**

Read nutrition labels on foods for the amount of fat and cholesterol and the type of fat. A simple method to keep your fat intake low is to divide calories from fat into total calories per serving. This number should be below 1/3. Your cholesterol intake should be no more than 200 mg. per day. Books containing nutrition information on many foods are available inexpensively at many bookstores.

► **Food Preparation Matters, Too**

Bake, broil or steam food instead of frying it.
Cook with vegetable oils. Use a nonstick spray or pan to limit the amount of oil you need.
Skim fat off the top of stews, soups, and sauces.
Season with herbs or broth rather than fats.
Reduce the amount of fat in recipes by a third or half.
Select recipes with low overall fat content.
Try to cook more "from scratch." You'll be better able to control fat content.

► **When Eating Out...**

Eat at restaurants that offer low-fat choices.
Ask how dishes are prepared.
Order broiled or baked food.
Ask for gravy, sauces, and salad dressings on the side. Use them very sparingly.
Ask for substitutes such as nonfat milk instead of milk or cream.
Order desserts such as angel food cake or fresh fruit.
Avoid ordering stews, cheese dishes, pizza, fried foods, or casseroles.
Ask that meats be trimmed prior to cooking.

► **Other Ways to Keep Cholesterol in Check**

Control your weight.
Exercise regularly.
Don't smoke. Ask us if you need help quitting.

► **Other Resources**

Contact these groups for additional information:

American Heart Association

National Center
7272 Greenville Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75231
www.americanheart.org

American Dietetic Association

216 W. Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60606-6995
www.eatright.org

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Information Center

PO. Box 30105
Bethesda, Maryland 20824-0105
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

**** Please contact your health care provider if you would like more information. ****

