

Helpful Basics about Cholesterol & Diet

Including certain foods and staying away from others can help in the maintenance of healthy cholesterol levels. By increasing fiber intake and choosing the right fats we can be pro-active in keeping our “good” cholesterol levels high and “bad” cholesterol levels low.



There are two types of cholesterol. HDL is known as the “good” cholesterol because it carries cholesterol from other parts of the body back to the liver where it gets flushed out. LDL is known as the “bad” cholesterol because it can stick to the walls of the arteries causing them to narrow or even block. Having high levels of LDL can put us at risk of coronary artery disease and other heart diseases.

Fibers

There are two types of fiber, soluble fiber, and insoluble fiber. While both are important for a healthy diet, soluble fiber can help to lower LDL cholesterol. The recommended amount of dietary fiber a day is 20-35 grams.

Listed below are some examples of foods high in soluble fiber.

- Dried beans and legumes
- Oats
- Barley
- Bananas
- Potatoes
- Apples
- Pears
- Brussels Sprouts
- Avocado
- Broccoli
- Turnips
- Figs
- Hazel nuts



Fats



When it comes to choosing dietary fats with heart health in mind it is best to stick with a diet low in saturated fats. Unsaturated fats are the better choice for keeping your cholesterol levels down. Keep in mind that no more than 25-35% of daily calories should come from fats and less than 7% should be from saturated fats.

When cooking with oils it is best to choose vegetable, nut, and seed oils. Some examples are extra virgin olive, avocado, sunflower, soy, and hemp seed oil. Steer clear of partially hydrogenated oil, and vegetable shortening.

There are many healthy fat food choices as well. Nuts and seeds, avocado, fish, eggs, edamame, and olives are just a few of the many choices.

Listed below are some examples of foods that contain saturated fats. Keep in mind that these foods do not need to be eliminated from your diet as many of them carry other health benefits. Moderation is key when incorporating saturated fats into your diet.

- Red meat
- Butter
- Bacon
- Cheese
- Coconut
- Cream
- Palm oil
- Coconut oil

In summary, many of these foods contain both soluble fiber and healthy fats which can help to maintain healthy cholesterol levels. Getting plenty of fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and fish is a good start!

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