

## Low-Cholesterol Diet Tips

Everyone is aware of the health concerns that plague today's society. Dangers are everywhere, from the air we breathe to the food we eat. There are some things that we can't control. Our diets, however, are completely in our hands.

The word "cholesterol" has been eliminated from the diets of most people seeking a healthier lifestyle. Cholesterol is the waxy substance within the fats that can clog our arteries. It's important to realize, however, that the human body requires a certain amount of cholesterol for the proper formation of cells and tissues.

Balance is the key. When cholesterol levels get too high, it may result in stroke or heart disease. Sustaining a healthy diet and getting enough exercise can help you to lower your cholesterol. Of course, choosing a low-cholesterol diet is an obvious choice.

### Making cholesterol friendly choices

When you choose a low-cholesterol diet, you don't necessarily have the freedom to eat as many cholesterol-free foods as you want. You simply have to be conscious of what you're taking in. Eating no less than three to five servings of fruit or vegetables each day is essential to sustain good health. Fruits and vegetables are excellent low-cholesterol choices, and they taste delicious. Make the produce section of the grocery store your first stop, whether you're buying for snacks, salads, desserts, side dishes or a main course. You can substitute vegetables for meat to create a variety of vegetarian dishes, such as soups, stews and lasagna. Fresh fruit alone, or combined in a salad, are light and delicious dessert options. Be sure to wash the produce well, and slice raw vegetables before storing them.

Grains are also excellent additions to your low-cholesterol diet. Breads, cereals, rice, beans, peas and pasta are all low in saturated fat and calories, but high in fiber and starch. Most of these foods, with the exception of bakery breads and sweet breads, contain no dietary cholesterol. Food guides suggest that an average person should enjoy six to eleven servings from the grain group each day. If you have a low HDL cholesterol level, try to keep your carbohydrate intake below the maximum 60% of the total calories. Try to choose whole grain cereals and grain-rich breads, as they naturally contain more fiber than typical white breads. Dry cereals are low in fat, and are also very good choices. Try to limit your intake of sweet baked goods, as these tend to be high in calories and cholesterol.

### Cholesterol and restaurants

When you are eating out, try to choose restaurants that offer delicious low-fat, low-cholesterol menu choices. Ask your server how the food is prepared, and choose baked or grilled meats and vegetables whenever possible. Avoid foods that are advertised as fried, basted, braised, stewed, pan-fried, sauteed or served crispy or au gratin. You should see these terms as high-cholesterol alerts. Dishes that are pickled, smoked, tomato-based, prepared with teriyaki sauce and served au jus should also be avoided. Instead, opt for menu choices that are broiled, steamed, poached, grilled, roasted or baked, as these are generally prepared without the unnecessary addition of extra fats. Steer clear of burgers with cheese, sauce and bacon. These fast-food favorites will have you on the fast track to a high cholesterol count.

A hearty breakfast can be a great way to start the day, but eggs, bacon, and sausage are loaded with cholesterol. Try lean ham, oatmeal, dry cereal, or fresh fruit instead. Eggs, particularly the yolks, are very high in cholesterol. A single egg yolk has a whopping 213 milligrams of cholesterol. Egg whites, however, have zero cholesterol. Try cooking with the whites only, or buy whites-only egg alternatives. When buying poultry, choose chicken rather than duck. Remember that birds store fats in the skin, so be sure to remove the skin before cooking for a delicious low-fat main dish.

The world around us may control some of the elements that can affect your health, but only you can control what you eat. Choosing a low-cholesterol diet is a great way to a healthier and happier lifestyle.