

HEALTHY YOU!



A Health & Wellness Guide to
Understanding Cholesterol

Let's talk cholesterol

It can be a bit of a shock to hear from your doctor that you need to reduce your blood cholesterol. You may have questions like:

"Will I ever get to enjoy my favourite foods again?"

"Am I going to have to overhaul my diet?"

"Am I headed for a life of salad after salad after salad?"

The good news is: yes, no and no... but we do think salads are a delicious part of a balanced diet!

Over the next several pages, let's talk cholesterol — what it is, what it isn't, and how it affects your health and daily routine. A balanced diet is a key aspect in maintaining healthy blood cholesterol, and spoiler alert: getting there is easier than you think. Turn the page for some food for thought.

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cholesterol 101

Read on for the basics on "good" vs "bad" cholesterol.

Cholesterol has a bad rep. But while people often think of it as uniformly bad, it also helps keep your body healthy. Cholesterol in food shouldn't be a concern if you maintain healthy blood cholesterol levels. But high cholesterol (high LDL cholesterol in particular) is considered a major risk factor for heart disease. That's why managing your cholesterol matters.

There are two main types of cholesterol-protein molecules in your bloodstream:

 **HDL** = Good Cholesterol

 **LDL** = Bad Cholesterol

So how can you increase your good cholesterol and decrease your bad cholesterol?

- Eat plenty of fibre
- Follow a Mediterranean style of eating heavy in fruit, veggies, legumes and lean protein
- Eat more plant-based proteins and eggs
- Limit saturated fats, sodium and sugar



Try this:

Pick up a vegetarian cookbook to try out some tasty new recipes rich in fibre!



Cholesterol & your diet



Food can be your ally in managing blood cholesterol. Here's how.

Your body produces all the cholesterol you need. Some foods (like eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish and dairy) also contain cholesterol. Recent lifestyle guidelines to prevent and manage heart disease and stroke do not recommend a limit on dietary cholesterol.^{1,2} Research shows dietary cholesterol from foods like eggs has little impact on blood cholesterol in most people.¹



Eggs & your health

As a protein-rich whole food, eggs fit into a healthy, balanced diet. They're naturally packed with vitamins, minerals, essential fats and antioxidants.



Whole foods are less processed and therefore healthier than refined foods.

Think: whole-grain bread containing all the grain (a great everyday staple) versus croissants or white bread, which are stripped of many nutrients and fibre.

Eat to lower your heart disease risk

Looking to manage blood cholesterol levels and lower your risk of heart disease? Health experts recommend the Mediterranean style of eating, with a wide variety of whole foods and lean protein sources.³



myth vs. fact

We're debunking common myths when it comes to healthy eating.



MYTH I have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, so I must change my diet entirely.

You can still generally enjoy your favourite foods—but moderation is key. Experts recommend adopting Mediterranean eating habits overall but this doesn't mean you can't eat foods high in saturated fat, sugar and sodium occasionally. Instead of focusing on removing foods from your diet, try adding in more nutritious foods, like a serving of whole grains, a serving of legumes, extra veggies and so on.

MYTH The cholesterol in eggs and seafood raises blood cholesterol.

Eggs and seafood contain cholesterol, but research shows cholesterol from food has very little impact on blood cholesterol levels. These foods can be enjoyed regularly as part of a heart-healthy diet.¹

Did you know?

Breakfast meats like sausage and bacon are high in saturated fat, so eat them in moderation.

Tip:

Pick up a new vegetable, fruit, whole grain or legume next time you're at the store, it might become a new favourite!

MYTH When making dietary improvements, changing everything at once will ensure lasting change.

Making small changes, one or two at a time, is more sustainable. Take it slow and steady with attainable, measurable goals like adding ½ cup of legumes to your lunch three times a week.

Try this:

Small, attainable changes add up. Read on for tips on healthy eating for life.

FACT Most Canadians don't get enough fibre in their diet.

Most Canadians are getting half the daily recommended fibre of 25 g for women and 38 g for men.⁴ Fibre plays a role in lowering bad cholesterol and increasing good cholesterol. While fruits and vegetables contain some fibre, other foods like whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds contain even more and are important to eat regularly.

Smart swap:

Trade half the ground meat in a recipe with lentils. Half the saturated fat plus extra fibre #winwin!

FACT Stress, sleep, physical activity, smoking and diet all affect cholesterol.

Lifestyle factors can definitely affect blood cholesterol levels. You can lower your blood cholesterol—and cut your cardiovascular disease risk—by reducing stress, getting at least 7 hours of sleep nightly, achieving 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, quitting smoking, and limiting your alcohol consumption.^{3,5}



FACT Saturated fat found in foods increases blood cholesterol.

Saturated fat raises our bad cholesterol and lowers our good cholesterol. The most common sources of saturated fat are highly processed and/or deep-fried foods. You can reduce the saturated fat in your diet by swapping fries or chips for whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and eggs. Foods high in saturated fat can be enjoyed occasionally, not every day.



Heart-healthy food swaps

Improve your nutrition by trying these wholesome alternatives.

Many popular foods are overly processed and high in saturated fat and/or sugar. While you don't have to give them up completely, choosing healthier options most of the time can improve your diet overall.^{2,5} Try these swaps and see what sticks. You may find some new faves!

Instead of these...

Refined grains

(i.e. white bread, rice, pasta, or crackers, sugary desserts, sugary cereals)

Processed meats

(i.e. bacon, sausage, hot dogs, deli meats, pepperoni, salami)

Sugar sweetened beverages & foods

(i.e. pop, juice, flavoured yogurt, chocolate milk)

Tropical oils & saturated fats

(i.e. coconut oil, palm oil, animal fats like butter and lard)

Alcoholic drinks

Reach for these



Whole grains

(i.e. oatmeal, barley, corn, popcorn, quinoa, whole grain breads, whole grain pasta, brown rice)



Plant-based protein

(i.e. edamame, tofu, beans, legumes)



Lean protein

(i.e. eggs, fish, seafood, low-fat dairy products, lean cuts of poultry and meat)



Vegetables & fruit

Tips: Try to "eat the rainbow" with a wide variety of produce in different colours weekly



Heart-healthy vegetable oils

(i.e. olive oil, canola oil)



Low-sugar, non-alcoholic drinks

Aim to drink water primarily, experiment with soda water, and non-alcoholic or low-alcohol, and low sugar beverages

Start a healthy routine

We get it: change isn't always easy. The good news is that small, measurable steps add up to create a positive impact on your health.



Try these **daily** and **weekly** tips to ease into your heart-healthy lifestyle:^{2,3}

See how many of these **daily** goals you can reach...

3+ servings of **whole grains**

Use **olive oil** primarily



Trade **wine, beer or spirits** for **sparkling water**



Swap 1 car errand for **walking** or **cycling**

If you smoke, **cut back**



with the aim of **quitting**

a handful of **30g** of **nuts**

See how many of these **weekly** goals you can reach...

150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity



2 weight training sessions

2-3 servings of **fish**

servings of **fish**



3-4 servings of **legumes**

Tips: Being active makes your heart stronger. Break up your 2.5 hours of weekly activity into easy 10-minute power walks, park play with the kids, gardening, or even active video games.

Limit weekly **alcohol** servings to **1-2** glasses of wine or bottles of beer or spirits

Any **reduction** in alcohol use has benefits⁶.

0 drinks	No risk
1-2 drinks	Low risk
3-6 drinks	Moderate risk
7+ drinks	Increasingly high risk



Heart-healthy granola

3½ cups (875 mL)
rolled oats

1 cup (250 mL)
walnuts, chopped

¼ cup (60 mL)
ground flaxseed

½ cup (125 mL)
shredded coconut,
unsweetened

¾ tsp (3.75 mL)
cinnamon

¼ tsp (1.25 mL)
salt

½ cup (125 mL)
peanut butter

¼ cup (60 mL)
maple syrup
or honey

1 tbsp (15 mL)
canola oil

1 egg white,
whisked until
foamy

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F/175°C. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
- 2 In a large bowl, combine oats, walnuts, ground flaxseed, coconut, cinnamon, and salt, mix well.
- 3 In a small bowl, stir together peanut butter, maple syrup or honey, and canola oil.
- 4 Pour peanut butter mixture into oat mixture and mix well until combined. Pour in whisked egg white and mix again.
- 5 Spread the granola onto the prepared baking sheet and place into the oven and bake for 15 mins, mix granola around and bake for another 10-15 mins, until golden brown.
- 6 Allow to cool completely and store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.



Serves
12



Calories
270 kcal



Prep time
5 mins



Cook time
30 mins

Stewed lentils with poached eggs

1 tbsp (15 mL)
olive oil

1 onion, sliced

1½ cups (375 mL)
mushrooms, quartered

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp (5 mL)
garlic powder

1 tsp (5 mL)
smoked paprika

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)
turmeric

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)
cumin

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)
cinnamon

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)
salt

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)
pepper

3 cups (750 mL)
dried brown lentils, rinsed well

4 cups (1 L)
vegetable or chicken broth
(low sodium)

1½ cups (375 mL)
grape tomatoes

4 large handfuls spinach

6-12 large eggs, poached

1 Place a rondeau over medium heat, add oil. Once hot, add onion and cook for 3 mins, then add mushrooms and garlic and cook for another 5 mins, stirring occasionally.

2 Next add spices, stir with a wooden spoon and cook out for 1 min. Add lentils, and broth, bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Add grape tomatoes, and cook for 25-30 mins, stirring occasionally, until liquid is absorbed, and lentils are softened. Remove from heat, stir in spinach and top with poached eggs!



Serves
6



Calories
574 kcal



Prep time
7 mins



Cook time
35 mins



Vegetarian chili with egg muffins

Cornmeal egg muffins

- 3/4 cup (175 mL)** cornmeal
- 1 1/4 cup (310 mL)** spelt flour
- 1 tbsp (15 mL)** baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)** salt
- 2 eggs**
- 3 tbsp (45 mL)** honey
- 3/4 cup + 2 tbsp (205 mL)** milk of choice
- 1/2 cup (125 mL)** olive or canola oil
- 8 eggs** – for putting into the middle of the muffins

Vegetarian chili

- 1 tbsp (15 mL)** olive oil
- 2 onions**, diced
- 3 cloves garlic**, minced
- 3 celery stalks**, diced
- 2 carrots**, peeled and diced
- 1 tbsp (15 mL)** tomato paste
- 2 bell peppers**, diced
- 2 tbsp (30 mL)** chili powder
- 1 tbsp (15 mL)** ground cumin
- 2 tsp (10 mL)** garlic powder
- 2 tsp (10 mL)** smoked paprika
- 2 tsp (10 mL)** turmeric
- 1 tsp (5 mL)** black pepper
- 1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)** salt
- 3 cans (796 mL ea)** diced tomatoes
- 1 can (398 mL)** kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can** navy beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can** lentils, drained and rinsed
- Optional toppings:
shredded cheese,
cilantro,
Greek yogurt

1 For the chili – In a large stockpot, over medium heat, add oil along with onion, garlic, celery and carrot. Cook, stirring occasionally for 5 mins, until onions are softened. Add tomato paste, bell peppers, spices and salt, stir and cook out for 1-2 mins until spices are fragrant.

2 Next, add in canned tomatoes, beans and lentils. Bring to boil and then reduce heat to low and cook for 30-45 mins stirring occasionally. To thicken it up, break up some of the beans with a wooden spoon when stirring.

3 For the cornmeal egg muffins – Preheat oven to 350°F/175°C and grease a jumbo muffin tin.

4 In a large mixing bowl, combine dry ingredients and whisk together. In a small bowl, combine wet ingredients, and mix well. Then pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients, mix until just combined, a few lumps are ok, do not overmix.

5 Fill muffin tins with 1/4 cup of batter, crack an egg into each and then top with another 1/4 cup of batter. Repeat with remaining batter and bake in preheated oven for approximately 25 mins, until cornmeal is baked through and golden. Eat immediately with chili and store any leftover cornmeal muffins in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days.



Serves
8



Calories
614 kcal



Prep time
10 mins



Cook time
1 hour for chili
25 mins for
egg muffins

References

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- ⁶ Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, January 2023 Available from: <https://ccsa.ca/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health-public-summary-drinking-less-better-infographic>

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