

Food Tips to Lower Your LDL (Bad) Cholesterol

LDL (bad) cholesterol can build up in the arteries. This build-up increases the chance that you will have heart disease. LDL cholesterol goals vary and are based on your risk factors. Discuss your goals with your provider.

Limit saturated fat, dietary cholesterol and avoid trans-fat.

Saturated fat is found in fatty meats such as beef and pork, whole milk, cheese, heavy cream, coconut oil, butter, fried foods, egg yolks and baked goods.

Trans fat is found in shortening, stick margarine, frozen pizzas and donuts. Many of the foods rich in saturated and trans fats are also high in dietary cholesterol.

Tips to lower saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol:

- Eat no more than 6 ounces of lean meats, poultry or fish each day.
- Limit beef or pork to once per week.
- Choose skim or low-fat dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream) and limit cheese to 3-4 times per week
- Use liquid oils (canola, olive, avocado) instead of solid fats (butter, lard, shortening, coconut and palm oils).
- Add beans, soy products and nuts to your diet.
- Limit foods which contain partially hydrogenated oils.
- Limit egg yolks to 4 per week.
- Avoid liver and other organ meats.
- Limit shrimp to 3-5 ounces per week.

- Limit saturated fats to about 13 grams per day or less and trans fats to 2 grams a day or less.

Add in healthy fats. These are liquid fats also called “unsaturated fats.” These can help lower LDL cholesterol. Omega-3 fats are also healthy fats and are often called “polyunsaturated fats.” These are better at lowering LDL cholesterol. To increase healthy fats:

- Have fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna 2 times per week.
- Add a handful of nuts and seeds daily, such as walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, or chia seeds.
- In cooking, use olive, avocado, sesame, or canola oils.
- Use avocados or nut butters for spreads or toppings.
- Include tofu, soybeans, soy nuts, tempeh, and edamame more often.

Eat foods high in fiber. Eating foods that are high in fiber helps in many ways besides lowering LDL cholesterol. Foods that are high in soluble fiber are better at lowering LDL cholesterol. It’s best to slowly increase the amount of fiber in your diet. This prevents stomach aches, bloating, gas, constipation, and diarrhea. To increase the fiber in your diet:

- Eat 2-4 servings of fruit and 4-8 servings of non-starchy vegetables per day.
- Make most of your grains whole grains such as wheat, barley, brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, oatmeal, or oat bran.

- Have beans or nuts as a topping on salads or as the protein in a veggie wrap.
- Include oat bran, oatmeal, barley, legumes, and ground flax seed more often as they are high in soluble fiber.

Add plant stanols or sterols. Include 2 grams of plant stanols or sterols per day. This may help lower your LDL cholesterol. Stanols and sterols are found in fortified foods or supplements. To add these in your diet you can:

- Add foods fortified with stanols and sterols. Ask your dietitian for more information.
- Include daily supplements such as CardioSterols or Cholestoff capsules and Benecol chews.

Achieve healthy weight. If you are overweight, losing 10 pounds may help you to lower your LDL cholesterol. To help you lose weight, you can:

- Increase fruits and vegetables.
- Decrease added sugars from sugar sweetened drinks.
- Eat smaller portions by using smaller plates.
- Eat out less often.

Get at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of exercise every week. Exercise can help increase your levels of HDL (good) cholesterol which helps to remove LDL cholesterol from the blood. If you add exercise it may also help you to lose weight.

Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days per week at a moderate pace where you can talk but not sing. Choose activities that you will enjoy such as a brisk walk, biking, swimming, or running.

Include a vegetarian style meal once per week. Eating plant proteins from beans, peas, lentils, soy, and nuts may help lower your LDL cholesterol. Including soy protein (25 grams) from soybeans, edamame, soy nuts, tofu, tempeh, soy milk, soy yogurt, or textured soy protein may help lower your LDL cholesterol. See how much soy protein you get from some soy-based foods below:

- ½ cup cooked soybeans = 14 g
- ½ cup edamame = 11 g
- ¼ cup soy nuts = 15 g
- ½ cup tofu = 10 g
- ½ cup tempeh = 15 g
- ¼ cup textured soy protein, dry = 11 g
- 1 cup soy milk = 7 g
- 1 cup soy yogurt = 5 g

Sample Meal Ideas to Lower LDL Cholesterol

Breakfast

- Oatmeal, 100% rolled oats or steel-cut, 1 cup cooked with 1% milk (4 oz.) with 2 Tbsp. walnuts, 1 tsp brown sugar and 1 medium banana
- 1 hard-boiled egg, 1 slice whole wheat toast with 1 tsp jam and 1 orange
- 1 cup whole grain cereal with 4 oz. 1% milk and ½ cup fresh or frozen berries
- 1 slice of whole wheat toast with 1 Tbsp. natural peanut butter and ½ cup sliced strawberries
- 2 egg whites scrambled with 1 cup fresh spinach, seasoned with black pepper or salt-free seasoning, and a medium apple

Lunch and Dinner

- 3 oz. chicken salad made with low-fat or fat-free greek yogurt, lettuce and ½ of 100% whole wheat pita pocket, ½ cup fruit salad and 1% milk
- 1 whole grain tortilla roll-up with 3 oz. low sodium turkey, 1 oz. swiss cheese, and 1 Tbsp. mustard, 1 cup raw snow peas and 1 cup frozen or fresh grapes
- 3 oz. tuna salad in a 100% whole wheat pita pocket with 3-4 slices bell peppers and 2 tomato slices, and a medium apple
- 3 oz. roasted turkey with ½ cup sautéed carrots and onions, 1 cup lettuce salad with 1 Tbsp. olive oil and balsamic vinegar dressing
- ¾ cup marinara sauce with ground turkey or lean ground beef over 1 cup spaghetti squash, 1 cup romaine salad with 1 Tbsp. olive oil and balsamic vinegar dressing, and 1 cup fresh fruit salad
- 4 oz baked cod, ½ cup brown rice with scallions, and 1 cup roasted beets
- 4 oz baked salmon, ½ cup wild rice, and 1 cup roasted brussels sprouts with balsamic vinegar and 1 oz pine nuts
- 3 oz tuna salad sandwich on 2 slices whole grain bread, 1 cup raw carrots, and 1 cup fresh fruit
- 2 cups spring mix or spinach with cherry tomatoes, sliced carrots, sliced radishes, cucumber slices, 1 oz almonds, 3 oz grilled chicken, and 2 Tbsp oil/vinegar salad dressing with 1 cup fresh fruit
- 1 cup garbanzo bean and potato curry, 1 cup side salad with 1 Tbsp oil/vinegar dressing
- 1 cup cooked quinoa with ½ cup beans (black or garbanzo or kidney) and variety of vegetables sauteed with garlic and onion in olive oil.
- ½ cup cooked brown rice and ½ cup cooked quinoa – sauteed with onions and garlic mixed with vegetables and protein of choice (fish or chicken or turkey).
- 1 cup cooked whole grain (Quinoa or brown rice or half cup of each) sauteed in olive oil with 2 hard-boiled egg whites. Use garlic and onion for sauteing.

Snacks

- 1 medium apple + 1 string cheese
- 2 Tbsp nuts + 2 Tbsp dried fruit
- 1 cup pea pods + ½ cup low-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 oz. peanuts in a shell + 1 medium orange
- 1 cup bell pepper strips + 1/3 cup guacamole
- 1 oz. low-fat cheese + 1 cup baby carrots
- 1 medium nectarine + 1 oz. almonds
- 4 oz light yogurt + 1 oz. walnuts
- 1 Light Laughing Cow® cheese + 1 cup grape tomatoes
- 4 oz Greek yogurt + 1 oz. almonds
- 1 small plum + low-fat cheese
- 1 medium apple, sliced + 1 Tbsp natural peanut butter

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please call UW Health at one of the phone numbers below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at **(608) 890-5500**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright 10/2021. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#519.