20 Ways to Improve Cholesterol Levels

Current guidelines focus more on limiting saturated fat than on restricting dietary cholesterol itself. Foods high in cholesterol often also contain saturated fat, so choosing lean proteins and low-fat dairy can help support healthy cholesterol levels.

Meat and Beans

- Choose smaller portions of meat. A daily total of 6 ounces is usually enough for most adults.
- Choose lean meats such as 93% lean ground meat, tenderloin, top sirloin, or round.
- Air-fry, bake, grill, broil, or roast meats.
- Trim visible fat and remove poultry skin before cooking or eating.
- Limit processed meats (sausage, bacon, deli meats).
- Include fish (not deep fried) at least 2 times per week.
- Include small amounts (1 handful or about ¼ cup) of nuts or seeds most days of the week.
- Plan meatless meals regularly. Beans, lentils, split peas, and soy foods (tofu, tempeh, edamame) are high fiber, low-fat protein sources that support healthy cholesterol levels.

Dairy and Eggs

- Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt (including Greek), cheese, and cottage cheese.
- Substitute frozen yogurt, or low-fat ice cream for regular ice cream.
- Limit egg yolks to about 4 per week; egg whites or egg substitutes can be used freely.

Fruits, Vegetables and Whole Grains

- Fill half your plate with colorful vegetables and include fruits or vegetables with snacks.
- Choose whole grains, such as oatmeal, barley, quinoa, brown or wild rice, whole grain bread or pasta.
- Choose foods high in soluble fiber: oats, barley, beans, lentils, apples, pears, citrus fruits, carrots, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes.

Fats Added to Foods

- Use smaller amounts of all fats (even healthy ones)
- Choose oils rich in unsaturated fats—olive, avocado, canola, or sesame oil—rather than butter, lard, or shortening.
- Avoid tropical oils (coconut, palm, palm kernel), which are high in saturated fat.
- Use reduced fat margarine, cream cheese, sour cream, mayo and salad dressing.
- Look for soft-tub or liquid margarines instead of stick margarines, which tend to contain more saturated fat.
- Limit fried foods, which are typically high in saturated and trans fats.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan.

For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

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 © 4/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#225