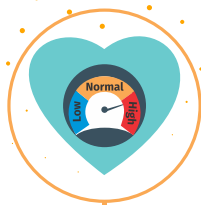




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Cholesterol:

Top foods to improve your numbers

Diet can play an important role in lowering your cholesterol. Here are the most preferred foods to lower your cholesterol and protect your heart-



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“LDL does serve a purpose - it carries cholesterol from your liver to your cells. In the process, some LDL deposits on the walls of your arteries. Your immune system reacts to this by sending out white blood cells to attack the LDL in an effort to remove it from the blood vessel, which creates an unhealthy inflammation of the blood vessels. As you age, more and more LDL grabs onto the artery wall, collecting in groups called plaques. When enough of these plaques form, the artery narrows, decreasing blood flow. Another danger is that one of these LDL plaques may break off, causing a blood clot and leading to a heart attack.”

Oatmeal, Oat Bran and high-fiber foods

Oatmeal contains soluble fiber, which reduces your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), the "bad" cholesterol. Soluble fiber is also found in foods such as kidney beans, apples, pears, barley and prunes.

Soluble fiber can reduce the absorption of cholesterol into your bloodstream. 5 to 10 grams or more of soluble fiber a day decreases your Total and LDL cholesterol. Eating 1 1/2 cups of cooked oatmeal provides 6 grams of fiber. If you add fruit, such as bananas, you'll add about 4 more grams of fiber. Whole grains like brown rice & quinoa can also be used.

Fish and Omega-3 fatty acids

Eating fatty fish can be heart healthy because of its high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce your blood pressure and risk of developing blood clots. In people who have already had heart attacks, fish oil - or omega-3 fatty acids - may reduce the risk of sudden death.

Although omega-3 fatty acids don't affect LDL levels, because of their other heart benefits, the American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish a week.

Walnuts, Almonds and other nuts

Walnuts, almonds and other tree nuts can improve blood cholesterol. Rich in mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids, walnuts also help keep blood vessels healthy.

Eating about a handful (42.5 grams) a day of most nuts, such as almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, some pine nuts, pistachio nuts and walnuts, may reduce your risk of heart disease. Make sure the nuts you eat aren't salted or coated with sugar.

Avocados

Avocados are a potent source of nutrients as well as monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs). According to a recent study, adding an avocado a day to a heart-healthy diet can help improve LDL levels in people who are overweight or obese.

Olive oil

Another good source of MUFAs is olive oil.

Try using about 2 tablespoons (23 grams) of olive oil a day in place of other fats in your diet to get its heart-healthy benefits. Both avocados and olive oil are high in calories, so don't eat more than the recommended amount. Solid fats such as coconut oil, butter, palm oil, palm kernel should be avoided.

Whey protein

Whey protein, which is one of two proteins in dairy products - the other is casein - may account for many of the health benefits attributed to dairy. Studies have shown that whey protein given as a supplement lowers both LDL and total cholesterol.

Other changes to your diet

For any of these foods to provide their benefit, you need to make other changes to your diet and lifestyle.

Although some fats are healthy, you need to limit the saturated and trans fats you eat. Saturated fats, like those in meat, butter, cheese and other full-fat dairy products, and some oils, raise your total cholesterol. Trans fats, often used in margarines and store-bought cookies, crackers and cakes, are particularly bad for your cholesterol levels. Trans fats raise LDL cholesterol, and lower high-density lipoprotein (HDL), the "good" cholesterol.

Food labels report the content of trans fats, but, unfortunately, only in foods that contain at least one gram per serving. That means you could be getting some trans fats in a number of foods, which could add up to enough trans fats in a day to be unhealthy and increase cholesterol. If a food label lists "partially hydrogenated oil," it has trans fat, and it's best to avoid it.

In addition to changing your diet, making other heart-healthy lifestyle changes is key to improving your cholesterol. Exercising, quitting smoking and maintaining a healthy weight will help keep your cholesterol at a healthy level.



Water:

How much should you drink every day?

Water is essential to good health, yet needs vary by individual. These guidelines can help ensure you drink enough fluids.



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“Water allows your kidneys to filter toxins, helps your cells take in nutrients and remove waste, and transports nutrients to every organ in your body. If you don’t drink enough water, then you might be suffering from a buildup of toxins throughout your body—from your kidneys to your bloodstream—and the effect is most definitely compromising your immune system.”

How much water should you drink each day? It's a simple question with no easy answers. Studies have produced varying recommendations over the years, but in truth, your water needs depend on many factors, including your health, how active you are and where you live.

Although no single formula fits everyone, knowing more about your body's need for fluids will help you estimate how much water to drink each day.

Health benefits of Water -

Water is your body's principal chemical component and makes up about 60 percent of your body weight. Every system in your body depends on water. For example, water flushes toxins out of vital organs, carries nutrients to your cells, and provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues.

Lack of water can lead to dehydration, a condition that occurs when you don't have enough water in your body to carry out normal functions. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired.

How much water do you need?

Every day you lose water through your breath, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. For your body to function properly, you must replenish its water supply by consuming beverages and foods that contain water.

So how much fluid does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need? The Institute of Medicine determined that an adequate intake (AI) for men is roughly about 13 cups (3 liters) of total beverages a day. The AI for women is about 9 cups (2.2 liters) of total beverages a day.

What about the advice to drink 8 glasses of water a day?

Everyone has heard the advice, "Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day." That's about 1.9 liters, which isn't that different from the Institute of Medicine recommendations. Although the "8 by 8" rule isn't supported by hard evidence, it

remains popular because it's easy to remember. Just keep in mind that the rule should be reframed as: "Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of **fluid** a day," because all fluids count toward the daily total.

Staying safely hydrated

Generally, if you drink enough fluid so that you rarely feel thirsty and your urine is colorless or light yellow — and measures about 6.3 cups (1.5 liters) or more a day if you were to keep track — your fluid intake is probably adequate. If you're concerned about your fluid intake or have health issues, check with your doctor. He or she can help you determine the amount of water that's right for you.

To ward off dehydration and make sure your body has the fluids it needs, make water your beverage of choice. It's also a good idea to:

- ▲ Drink a glass of water or other calorie-free or low-calorie beverage with each meal and during interval between each meal
- ▲ Drink water before, during and after exercise

Although uncommon, it is possible to drink too much water. When your kidneys are unable to excrete the excess water, the electrolyte (mineral) content of the blood is diluted, resulting in low sodium levels in the blood, a condition called hyponatremia. Endurance athletes, such as marathon runners who drink large amounts of water, are at higher risk of hyponatremia.



How to avoid heart disease



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“A person with both a first-degree relative (a parent or sibling) and a second-degree relative (uncle or grandparent) who suffer from heart disease before the age of 60 is nearly 10 times more likely to suffer from heart disease early in life.”

If you would like to improve your heart health but worried about the motivation to join a gym or make big diet changes. Take our doctor's advice -

It's great that you want to improve your heart health. Don't think that you have to make big changes to have an effect on your heart health, though. Even small, basic steps can have dramatic effects. One of the biggest drops in heart disease risk occurs when you go from living a sedentary lifestyle to being active for as little as one hour a week. Obviously, the more active you are, the better. But just one solid hour of activity over the course of a week makes a difference.

Some steps for getting started are "Eat 5, Move 20, Sleep 8." Here's a summary of the quick start:

Eat5- Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day to boost your heart health. Start by eating breakfast and including at least one serving of fruit or vegetable. Snack on vegetables or fruits in between meals. Make a conscious effort to include fruits and vegetables in your daily meals. Don't worry so much about foods you shouldn't eat, just work on getting five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Move20- Add at least 20 minutes of moderately intense physical activity to

what you do every day. The American Heart Association recommends 30 mins of moderate intensity workout for at least 5 days a week i.e a total of 150 minutes a week of physical activity can reduce your heart disease risk. That's a big benefit from a pretty small commitment on your part. It doesn't have to be elaborate - take the stairs, take a walk, just get moving. As you become more active, you can try to increase your total amount of activity each day.

Sleep 8- Quality sleep is good for your heart. It can be a challenge to make time for good sleep, but it's important. For two weeks try to get eight hours of good, quality sleep each night. Yes, each person's sleep needs vary slightly, but eight is a good number to shoot for.

All of these tips -

Eat 5, Move 20, Sleep 8 - are meant to be tried for two weeks before you move on to a more established healthy heart plan. But there's nothing wrong with continuing this quick start for longer periods. You may also consider trying other reputable diet and exercise plans to accelerate your journey of achieving good health.

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