

## **Foods that help reduce cholesterol**

Before we start finding ways to reduce our cholesterol, let us be clear about one thing. We need cholesterol for our survival. Our liver produces it even if we don't get it externally. Cholesterol is necessary for our existence. It is used to make hormones such as cortisol, vitamin D, cell membranes and create bile acids that are used to digest the fat in your stomach. Our liver produces enough cholesterol without us having to supplement it.

However, too much cholesterol leads to cardio vascular disease such as atherosclerosis and hypertension as well as stroke.

### **What is cholesterol and why do we need it?**

Cholesterol is a fatty substance (a type of Lipid) made by the liver. It is also found in animal products like meat, chicken, prawns, eggs, and fish, dairy and dairy products (such as milk, butter, cheese, ice cream and any product that contains dairy).

So if you hear your doctor say lipid profile, it means a cholesterol test.

When your blood is tested, you will see that there are about 5 reading for cholesterol. LDL, HDL, Serum Cholesterol, Cholesterol/ HDL Ratio and Triglycerides. What do all these mean and do we have to be worried if all of them are high?

Let's start with the LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein or the bad cholesterol) and HDL (High Density Lipoprotein or the good cholesterol). Proteins are the vehicles that carry the lipids in your blood. Hence the name Lipoprotein. The LDL deposits cholesterol in your arteries and this is what gives rise to clogged arteries which then results in cardio vascular diseases such as atherosclerosis (the hardening of your arteries). The HDL is your good cholesterol and works by removing the deposits in your arteries. Imagine 6 people filling your garden with rubbish and 4 people removing it. This is the approximate ratio of LDL to HDL. So it is in our interest in maintaining good health, not to increase this ratio in favour of the bad cholesterol (LDL). How do we do that? Simply by changing the types of food we eat (though for some, medication might initially be their only option).

Serum Cholesterol is the total cholesterol measure in your blood. Cholesterol/ HDL ratio is simply your total serum cholesterol divided by the HDL.

Triglycerides provide energy for the functioning of the cells. Like the cholesterol, the liver also produces the triglycerides and like cholesterol, triglycerides can also come from animal and dairy

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products. Triglycerides are mainly stored in your hips and belly and high triglycerides levels are a risk for heart diseases.

### **What are the ideal ranges:**

Recommended levels are as follows (but please check with your doctors as these levels could change):

LDL: Under 3 mmol/l (117 mg/dl)

HDL: 1 and above mmol/l (39 mg/dl)

Serum Cholesterol: Under 5 mmol/l (195 mg/dl)

Triglycerides: under 1.7 mmol/l (151 mg/dl)

*(To convert mmol/l of HDL or LDL cholesterol to mg/dl, multiply by 39.*

*To convert mmol/l of triglycerides to mg/dl, multiply by 89).*

There are studies that suggest keeping your cholesterol levels below 3.8 mmol/l (150 mg/dl) will reduce risks of heart disease.

Now to the part you probably were waiting for:

### **What foods will help reduce cholesterol?**

Many foods are great to reduce cholesterol. Remember that only animal based products give you cholesterol and plant based products produce no cholesterol. Mike Anderson did a wonderful documentary called Eating, available at [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk). It explains what type of diseases can be reversed just by changing what you eat. You will also hear from Dr. Heidrich who treated her breast cancer by simply changing her diet. The DVD also covers a wide-range of other health problems, including the reversal of adult-onset diabetes with diet. It also covers the impact of typical Western diets on the environment. The Eating DVD is used in hospitals and wellness clinics throughout the world to motivate people to change their diets and restore their health

Here are some of the foods that will help you reduce your high cholesterol:

1. Fruits such as Apples, Bananas, Berries, Cherry, Coconuts, Oranges, Peach, Pear
2. Vegetables such as Brussels Sprout, Beans, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Onions, Yam
3. Nuts such as Almonds, Cashews, Pecans, Pistachio, Walnuts

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4. Cereals such as Oats and Muesli taken with non dairy milk
5. Replace your butter with non –dairy spreads like “PURE” or “VITALITE” or other brands that says non- dairy and suitable for vegans.
6. Replace your dairy milk with non dairy such as Soya Milk, Oats Milk, Almond Milk etc
7. Stop all dairy cheese and look for vegan based cheese.

\*Some interesting facts:

1. **Apples** (Can reduce risk up to 50%)  
Research in Netherlands has shown that the phytochemicals in apples could help cut the risk of death from heart disease or stroke in half. Drinking 12 ounces of apple juice or eating two whole apples a day is beneficial.
2. **Berries** Berries like strawberries and cranberries are rich in antioxidants, which reduce the risk of heart disease.
3. **Onions** (Can reduce risk up to 25%)  
Eat half a raw onion a day raises HDL (good) cholesterol an average of 25 percent in most people with cholesterol problems.
4. **Legumes/Beans** (Can reduce risk up to 30%)  
The fiber, protein and other compounds present in legumes, lentils and beans can reduce cholesterol, blood clotting and improve blood-vessel function. These are also a great source of folate, which keeps homocysteine levels (an indicator of heart trouble), in check. One serving of dried beans/legumes a day can reduce cholesterol by up to 10%.
5. **Oats** (Can reduce risk up to 29%)  
Oats contain beta-glucans, a soluble fiber. Eating about one-cup of cooked oatmeal a day significantly decreases blood cholesterol levels.
6. **Nuts - Pistachios & Walnuts**  
Eating 67 grams of nuts, including in-shell pistachios, can significantly lower total and LDL cholesterol levels by upto 5 and 7% respectively and triglycerides by upto 10%, according to a study reported in the Archives of Internal Medicine in May 2010.  
"In-shell pistachios are good for lowering cholesterol & triglycerides, improve blood vessel function, blood sugar control, act as potent antioxidant and offer weight management benefits, all of which are important for improving heart health," according to Martin Yadrick, immediate past-president of the American Dietetic Association.  
**Walnuts** (Can reduce risk up to 45%)  
Walnuts contain omega 3 fatty acids, which lowers cholesterol and prevents blood clots. Eating walnuts can decrease your total cholesterol level by 12% and LDL cholesterol level by 16%.  
**Peanuts (Ground nuts)**  
Peanut contain vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant that is shown to significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Peanut has high bioflavonoid resveratrol

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which helps improve blood flow in the brain by about 30%, thus reducing the risk of stroke. Adding even small amounts of peanut products to the diet can reduce LDL cholesterol by 14%.

7. **Olive Oil, Canola Oil** (Can reduce risk up to 40%)

Of all cooking oils, olive oil contains the largest proportion (77%) of monounsaturated fat and has powerful antioxidants, which lowers LDL cholesterol without affecting HDL levels.

8. **Psyllium Husk for High Cholesterol**

3g to 12g soluble fiber from psyllium seed husk when included as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce total cholesterol and LDL levels.

9. **Vegetables** Green leafy vegetables like spinach, fenugreek - methi and broccoli are foods rich in iron, magnesium, calcium and antioxidants that protect our heart against cholesterol.

10. **Herbs for lowering cholesterol**

Green tea, Terminalia, Arjuna, Rauwolfia serpentine, Sida Cordifolia and Digitalis Pupurea are heart friendly herbs. These herbs can be taken in the form of tea.

\*Source: fatfreekitchen.com