

Nutritional Therapy for High Blood Cholesterol

If you have high blood cholesterol, lowering it will help protect you from heart disease caused by cholesterol deposits in the coronary arteries. Here's what you need to know to help lower your cholesterol by changing the way you eat.

High Fat Equals High Cholesterol

Most of the foods that are high in cholesterol are also high in saturated fats. This is particularly true of red meats, fatty cuts like bacon and organ meats such as liver. It's wise to avoid these meats altogether and limit other meats to 3 to 6 ounces per day or less. Other sources of saturated fat are eggs and dairy fats such as butter and cream.

Since even unsaturated fats can raise cholesterol levels, you should restrict your intake of fat altogether whenever possible.

Choose Low-Fat Protein

Protein is important in a well-balanced diet, but most animal protein comes laced with fat. Why not make vegetable protein an important part of your diet? Excellent quality protein can be found in dried beans, peas, whole grains and pastas.

Your best bets for low-fat animal protein are skinless poultry white meat and fish (try to limit shellfish, as they are typically high in cholesterol). The best dairy choices are 1 percent or nonfat milk

and yogurt, low-fat cheeses such as farmers cheese, pot cheese, low-fat cottage cheese and part-skim ricotta.

Fiber

Researchers aren't sure about the role of fiber in reducing cholesterol, but some evidence indicates that soluble fiber such as the kind found in oatmeal can help reduce cholesterol. To avoid digestive upsets, add fiber gradually to your diet and include fluids in meals that contain fiber.

Cook It Right

When cooking food, choose the low-fat alternative. Bake, broil, steam or poach your food. Use vegetable spray for pan-frying. If you must use fat to cook, use a low-saturated-fat oil such as olive oil rather than butter.

Read the Label

We think of saturated fats as animal fats. But two of the most highly saturated fats—coconut oil and palm oil—are widely used in packaged cookies, cakes and other baked goods as well as potato chips. Reading the label can help you steer clear of foods that contain these oils or any hydrogenated vegetable oil.

Vegetables: Front and Center

Studies show that heart disease is rare in countries where little animal food is eaten. Do your heart a favor and make vegetables, grains, beans, peas and whole wheat pastas a big part of your diet.

