



Tasty foods to help you lower cholesterol naturally

We all know that butter, ice cream and fatty meats raise cholesterol, but here's the good news: some foods can help **lower** your cholesterol. Not only can these "functional foods" make a big impact on your health, but they're much tastier than a pill chased with a glass of water.

Researchers have found that foods such as wild salmon (and other fish rich in Omega-3s), walnuts, oatmeal, oat bran and foods fortified with plant sterols (or stanols) can help control your cholesterol. Some studies have shown that a diet including these "superfoods" may work as well as some cholesterol-lowering medicines to reduce your "bad" LDL cholesterol levels.

This is great news for the 105 million adults in the U.S. with high cholesterol. Making good food choices is an easy way to improve your health. It also puts less strain on your pocketbook. A trip to the grocery store is bound to be cheaper than a trip to the pharmacy. Also, many people can't handle the side effects from cholesterol drugs. So, focusing on diet instead, is a great option.

Getting started on a low-cholesterol diet

Managing high cholesterol isn't a simple do-it-yourself project. You need to work with your health care provider. And while changing your diet may help a lot, many people still need drugs to reduce their risk of heart disease.

Also, remember that these foods aren't cure-alls. A handful of walnuts or a bowl of oatmeal won't make you invincible. It won't give you a free pass to eat all the high-fat foods you want. To benefit, you still must eat low-fat foods, watch your weight and exercise.

"Eating a healthy diet is not just about eating a few special foods," says Suzanne Farrell, MS, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. "There's a bigger picture. You need to practice moderation, eat a variety of foods and get enough physical activity."



Adapted from "The New Low-Cholesterol Diet," WebMD
Sources: Suzanne Farrell, MS, RD, spokeswoman, American Dietetic Association. Ruth Frechman, RD, Los Angeles; spokeswoman, American Dietetic Association. Keecha Harris, DrPH, RD, spokeswoman, American Dietetic Association. U.S. Food and Drug Administration web site. American Dietetic Association web site. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute web site. American Heart Association web site. Jenkins, D. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, February 2005, vol 81: pp 380-87. Jenkins, D. Journal of the American Medical Association, July 23-30, 2003, vol 290: pp 502-510.
© 2005 - 2007 WebMD Inc. All rights reserved.

Link to this article:
<http://www.webmd.com/content/article/134/119055.htm>