

HOW TO LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVELS - A STARTING POINT

Cholesterol is simply a kind of fat that is needed by our bodies. It is found in animal foods and is also made by the body. Cholesterol only becomes a problem when the level in the blood becomes too high.

Why do some people have a high cholesterol level?

This may be inherited (from our parents) but more often it is a result of our diet and lifestyle. A diet high in fat, especially saturated (animal) fat, may be the cause of a high blood cholesterol.

Does it matter if my cholesterol level is high?

A high blood cholesterol level has been shown to increase the risk of a heart attack. There are, however, other risk factors such as smoking, being overweight, high blood pressure, drinking too much alcohol, having diabetes and lack of exercise. The more of these risk factors you can change, the less likely you are to have a heart attack.

Having a high blood cholesterol does not mean you have or will get heart disease. However, it does mean your risk factor will be greater.

The good news is that if you know your level is high, you can make some changes to reduce your cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

HEALTHY EATING CAN REDUCE BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

- 1) Cut down on fats especially animal (saturated) fat. Use unsaturated (vegetable) fats but remember to use small amounts.
- 2) Increase dietary fibre such as wholemeal bread, pasta, rice, fruit, veg, oats and pulses.
- 3) Eat oily fish (sardines, tuna, salmon, caballa) at least twice a week.
- 4) If you need to reduce your weight cut down on sugary foods such as sweets, cakes, chocolates and fizzy drinks. Choose low-sugar alternatives instead.

SOME WAYS TO CHANGE YOUR DIET

Cooking methods : choose cooking methods which do not require any added fat or oil such as grilling, baking and steaming. If you have a microwave you do not need to use fat in cooking.

- Cut down on fried foods.

Dairy foods : try skimmed or semi-skimmed milk. They can be used in sauces and custard. Use low-fat yoghurt or fromage frais instead of cream with fruit, in sauces, salad dressings and desserts. Use medium and low-fat cheeses such as Edam, half-fat cheddar and cottage cheese.

- Avoid the full cream milks including evaporated and condensed milks.

Main courses : eat chicken/turkey (without the skin) or fish more often. Choose the leanest cuts of meat and use smaller portions. Try more vegetable based dishes using pulses (beans, peas, lentils).

- Avoid fatty meats such as chorizo, morcilla, tocino.

Snacks : eat more fresh fruit!

- Cut down on pastries, cakes, crisps and chocolates. They all have a high 'hidden fat' content.

Spreads : choose a margarine or low fat spread labelled 'high in unsaturates' and use very little.

- Replace butter and other types of margarines where possible.

**IF YOU FEEL IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO DISCUSS YOUR DIET IN MORE
DETAIL ASK YOUR DOCTOR TO REFER YOU TO THE DIETITIAN.**