

Know Your Numbers: Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver and other cells. It's also found in certain foods, such as dairy products, eggs and meat. Your body needs some cholesterol to function properly. Cholesterol helps your body make hormones, keeps cell walls strong and helps produce vitamin D. But the body only needs a limited amount of cholesterol. When there's too much, health problems, such as heart disease, may develop.

Your Blood Cholesterol:	Optimal Range: <200mmol/L
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Suggestions for improvement:

- Bulk up on fiber from complex carbohydrates. Women should aim for 25 grams per day and men 38 grams. Get it from fruit, vegetables, whole grain and beans.

Whole Grains	Fruit	Vegetables	Beans/Legumes
½ cup quinoa (6 grams)	1 large apple (4 grams)	1 cup cooked carrots (4 grams)	½ cup minestrone soup (5 grams)
½ cup whole grain pasta (3 grams)	1 banana (3 grams)	1 cup broccoli (5 grams)	¼ cup kidney beans (3 grams)
½ cup oatmeal (3 grams)	1 pear (4 grams)	½ avocado (5 grams)	¼ cup black beans (7.5 grams)
½ cup bran flakes (3.5 grams)	1 cup berries (7 grams)	1 cup cooked sweet potatoes (6 grams)	¼ cup hummus (4 grams)

- Eliminate sugary “simple carbohydrates.” This allows more room for complex carbohydrates (above), which are full of fiber. Limit your intake of the following foods:
 - “Processed” food: Frozen dinners, pre-packaged snack food, chips/candy/chocolate bars, crackers and pre-packaged cookies/cakes/brownies/pastries.
 - “Simple carbohydrates”: “White” foods: bread, rice, potatoes, pizza, etc. and foods high in sugar: fruit juice, soda, sports drinks, candy, chocolate bars, cereal with more than 7 grams of sugar per servings, fruit snacks, cookies/cakes/pastries.

- Limit saturated fat. Avoid eating pork sausage, bacon, pepperoni, salami, hot dogs, bologna and kielbasa. Limit your intake of these foods to two times per week.
- Limit full fat dairy intake. Switch to reduced fat cheese/yogurt/milk, and keep dairy intake to two servings per day. Try dairy alternatives such as almond or coconut products.
- Focus on foods that boost your overall health, such as red/green vegetables and fruits (kale, beets, berries), lean protein (chicken, fish, turkey, eggs), and omega-rich foods (hemp/chia/flax seeds, salmon, mackerel, walnuts, etc.)
- Avoid breading and frying your food. Instead, focus on baking, grilling and sautéing.
- Get moving! It is suggested that you get 30 minutes of exercise five days per week. This can help you to maintain a healthy body weight, raise your HDL, and lower your triglycerides and LDL into an optimal range.
- Losing weight, quitting smoking and reducing stress can also help lower your total cholesterol.

Here are three ways I can start working on lowering my cholesterol:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Here are the other types of cholesterol you might have had tested recently. Apply the principles above to help improve these numbers:

Type of Cholesterol	Optimal Range	Your Range
LDL (“bad” cholesterol; moves fat from liver to arteries)	<100	
HDL (“good” cholesterol; helps body get rid of LDL and improves heart health)	>40 (men) >50 (women)	
Triglycerides (excess calories and sugar are stored as fat in the form of triglycerides)	<150	

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