

# Foods to Choose to Lower Your Cholesterol

Many people can lower cholesterol levels simply by changing what they eat. For example, if you are a fan of cheeseburgers, eating less meat (and leaner cuts) and more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains can lower your total cholesterol by 25% or more. Cutting back on saturated fat (found in meat and dairy products) and trans fat (partially hydrogenated oils) can reduce cholesterol by 5% to 10%. Here are steps for using your diet to lower cholesterol.

	Unsaturated Fats	Soluble Fiber	Plant Sterols and Stanols
			
	<b>Stick with unsaturated fats and avoid saturated and trans fats.</b>	<b>Get more soluble fiber.</b>	<b>Include plant sterols and stanols in your diet.</b>
<b>In Your Diet</b>	Most vegetable fats (oils) are made up of unsaturated fats that are healthy for your heart. Foods that contain healthy fats include oily fish, nuts, seeds, and some vegetables. At the same time, limit your intake of foods high in saturated fat, which is found in many meat and dairy products, and stay away from trans fats. These include any foods made with "partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.	Eat more soluble fiber, such as that found in oatmeal and fruits. This type of fiber can lower blood cholesterol levels when eaten as part of a healthy-fat diet.	These naturally occurring plant compounds are similar in structure to cholesterol. When you eat them, they help limit the amount of cholesterol your body can absorb. Plant sterols and stanols are found in an increasing number of food products such as spreads, juices, and yogurts.
<b>Helpful Definitions</b>	<p><b>What is unsaturated fat?</b> A type of fat containing a high proportion of fatty acid molecules with at least one double bond, considered to be healthier in the diet than saturated fat (olive oil, salmon, almonds, natural peanut butter, avocados).</p> <p><b>What is saturated fat?</b> A type of fat containing a high proportion of fatty acid molecules without double bonds, considered to be less healthy in the diet than unsaturated fat (fatty beef, lard cream, butter, cheese).</p> <p><b>What is trans-fat?</b> Another term for trans-fat is trans-fatty acid. Trans-fat is unsaturated fatty acid of a type occurring in margarines and cooking oils as a result of the hydrogenation process. (doughnuts, fried foods, cookies, cakes, frozen pizza, snack and fast foods).</p>	<p><b>What is soluble fiber?</b> Soluble fiber is soft and sticky, and absorbs water to form a gel-like substance inside the digestive system. Soluble fiber helps soften stool so it can slide through the GI tract more easily.</p>	<p><b>What are plant stanols?</b> If the level of plant sterols is low, the presence of plant stanols is lower. When plant sterols and stanols are combined, these resemble cholesterol. The difference is the former is healthy for your body while the latter is not.</p> <p><b>What are plant sterols?</b> Plant sterols can be found in its natural state in vegetables and fruits. Legumes, vegetable oils, nuts, cereals, and seeds are likewise sources of plant sterols.</p> <p><b>What are plant sterinols?</b> Plant sterinols are synonymous to plant sterols. Both refer to the fats content of plants. When natural foods like seeds and nuts are processed, the content level of sterinol is diminished.</p>

## Food Sources

**Avocados:** This delicious fruit, is full of monounsaturated fats. Avocados are easy to prepare and can be added to many recipes.

**Olives:** Green, black, Kalamata – olives are not only high in flavor, but are also high in monounsaturated fats. There are many opportunities to add olives to your cholesterol-friendly diet.

**Nuts:** Nuts come in a wide variety of types. Nuts are high in both polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA) and monounsaturated fats. Walnuts are typically higher in PUFAs in comparison to other nuts, pistachios, almonds, and pecans are higher in monounsaturated fat content. Nuts are also high in other healthy ingredients, such as fiber, phytosterols, vitamins, minerals, and protein.

**Fatty fish:** Fish are generally lean and good to include in a lipid-lowering diet. Some are high in omega-3 fats and would include salmon, mackerel, herring, tuna, and anchovy. Keep fish heart-healthy by grilling, baking, or poaching.

**Certain oils:** Oils can be added to dips and dressings and be used in cooking sautéed or baked goods. Switch out butter or margarine for oils high in unsaturated fat. These include olive, canola, vegetable, safflower, corn and soybean oils.

**Seeds:** Seeds make a good go-to snack that is high in filling fiber, protein, and unsaturated fat. Sesame seeds are higher in monounsaturated fats. Pumpkin, sunflower, flax and chia seeds are higher in PUFAs. Seeds can be included in side dishes, cereal, or as a topping for yogurt/salad.

**Eggs:** Eggs contain saturated fats and unsaturated fats. When prepared without frying, they are considered a healthy addition to your diet.

**Dark chocolate:** Chocolate contains a small portion of monounsaturated fats, and, in low to moderate amounts, has been considered healthy.

**Whole Grains:** Most grains have some soluble fiber content, but the champions are oats and barley. Both are rich in a type of soluble fiber called beta-glucan. This soluble fiber is what gives oatmeal its characteristically creamy texture, and barley its ability to gently thicken soups.

**Vegetable Sources:** Many vegetables are rich in soluble fiber, usually in the form of pectins. Brussels sprouts pack a lot, at 3.9 grams per cup, but broccoli and cabbage, and popular favorites including sweet potatoes, avocados and asparagus, are also good sources. Another soluble fiber you'll find in vegetables is inulin, which is widely sold as fiber supplement. It's found in onions, chicory and sunchokes.

**Beans and Legumes:** If you're a big fan of legume-heavy cuisines such as Indian or Mexican food, you're in luck, because beans, peas and lentils are all potent sources of soluble fiber. Incorporating them into your soups, salads and entrees, or even as a dip for snacking, can add lots of soluble fiber to your diet quickly and easily.

**Fruit:** Jams and jellies gel because of pectin, the same form of soluble fiber that's found in vegetables. Apples, and pears are high in pectin, and apples and pears are readily available all year at modest cost. Oranges and other citrus fruits are high in soluble fiber, and so are figs and dates.

**Seeds and Nuts:** Most nuts contain some soluble fiber, though it won't add up quickly because your portion size is typically small. Pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds contain roughly twice as much soluble fiber per portion, and are a healthier snack than most. The real stars are flaxseed and chia seeds. You don't eat those on their own, but adding ground flax or chia to recipes and smoothies will boost their levels of soluble fiber.

There are a number of foods with plant sterols and stanols. If you are looking for high concentration of these nutrients naturally, then you should eat a lot of cereals and rice bran.

Nuts especially peanuts and its by-products of flour, oil and butter, soybeans, wheat germ, and corn oil are also good sources of sterols as well as stanols.

In addition to the lists below, higher quantities may be provided by table spreads that have been prepared for commercial distribution and in some supplements.

### **Foods with Plant Sterols:**

Sesame oil, wheat germ oil, mayonnaise, pistachio nuts, olive oil, sage, oregano, thyme, paprika, cocoa butter oil, almond butter, sesame seeds, macadamia nuts.

### **Foods with Plant Stanols:**

Rice bran, wheat germ, oat bran, bran, whole wheat, brown rice, legumes, dried peas, dried beans, lentils, peanuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans, sunflower, pumpkin and sesame seeds. Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, dill, apples, avocados, tomato, vegetable oil, blueberries.