

How to Improve your Cholesterol

HDL (Happy Cholesterol) Goals: Men HDL > 40 Women HDL > 50
LDL (Lousy Cholesterol) Goals: Ask your doctor. In general, for everyone LDL < 160, people with risk factors for heart disease, like age or high blood pressure should be LDL < 130, People with diabetes LDL < 100

1. Weight loss will increase your HDL. Once your weight stabilizes, on average your HDL may increase about 1 point for every 7 pounds you lose.
2. Use monounsaturated fats in cooking. Olive oil for flavored or spicy dishes. Canola oil for more neutral dishes. The evidence that these oils raise HDL is not super strong, but it is certainly better to cook with a little Olive or Canola oil than a saturated fat like butter. Even better, PAM No-Stick cooking spray with olive oil.
3. Aerobic exercise is the number one most important method to raise your HDL. Some studies suggest your HDL can go up about 10-20% with aerobic exercise. How long you exercise is more important than the intensity, which means that it is better to jog or walk several miles than to run shorter distances. You do have to exercise quite a bit to get a beneficial effect. One study showed a 1 point increase in HDL per every 4-5 miles walked a week (about a 20 minute walk most days of the week).
4. Small amounts of alcohol, such as 1-6 drinks a week have been shown to protect the heart and raise HDL. Despite this benefit, the American Heart Associations still recommends that if you do not drink alcohol now, that you should not start drinking just for this benefit. But remember, wine is full of calories, so drink sparingly. Red wine in particular has been shown to be protective, because of the flavonoids it contains. If you have diabetes, liver problems, or you are taking multiple medicines, ask you doctor before drinking alcohol.
5. Use multigrain or whole wheat bread or wheat rolls instead of white bread.
6. Cut down on the "high glycemic load" foods such as refined, processed sugars, such as those in white bread, white pasta, sweet snacks, sodas, potatoes and cakes. These foods are more likely to raise your blood sugar.
7. Small amounts of nuts, just 1-2 ounces a day can help. Use walnuts, almonds, peanuts, pecans or macadamia nuts. Just watch the calories!
8. Avoid deep-fried foods. And do not re-use cooking oil, because using it over and over again increases the "trans" fatty acids, which are bad fats.
9. Use a cholesterol lowering margarine like Benecol, Take Control or Smart Balance Light that has zero trans fats, or very small amounts of organic butter.
10. Soluble fiber like oatmeal and vegetables can soak up cholesterol and prevent it from getting absorbed. Stay away from Soy substitutes and Soy Burgers. This may be linked to several health concerns.
11. Dramatically reduce your saturated fat intake. Saturated fat is found in red meat, pork, butter, visible fat in meat like the fat on bacon or prime rib or marbled fat. Most cookies, crackers, chips and anything with vegetable shortening has a lot of saturated fat. Avoid cream and ice cream.
12. Two servings of fatty fish a week, like Salmon or Swordfish are helpful. Fish oil capsules can help. Do not take Fish Oil if you have a heart rhythm problem.

13. To avoid trans fats, look on the nutrition label of packaged foods. They'll appear on the ingredients list as "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" vegetable oils. If you can, switch to products that don't use hydrogenated oils

14. Five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. A good idea is to get at least one of every Five colors a day, RED- WHITE- BLUE- YELLOW and GREEN. For example, red tomatoes, white onion, blueberries, yellow squash and green pepper.

15. Avoid high-fat processed meats like bologna, sausage, salami and hot dogs.

16. Make recipes with egg substitute or egg whites instead of yolks. Limit egg yolks to less than 3 or 4 eggs a week.

17. Lots of veggies and fruit can help. Apples, citrus fruit, sweet potatoes are high in soluble fiber and pectin that soak up cholesterol.