



## How to Improve Your Blood Cholesterol Levels

Total blood cholesterol contains two types of cholesterol:

**“Bad Cholesterol” Low Density lipoproteins (LDL):** can form plaque on your artery walls and block blood flow to your heart. Aim for low LDL levels

**“Good Cholesterol” High Density lipoproteins (HDL):** helps remove LDL cholesterol from your arteries. Aim for high HDL levels.

### Steps you can take to improve your blood cholesterol levels

- ✓ Choose foods that are lower in saturated fat:
  - 1% or 2% milk and lower fat milk alternatives such as cheese with 20% or less milk fat (M.F.)
  - Legumes (peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas and rajma)
  - Skinless fish and poultry
- ✓ Include small amounts of small amounts of vegetable based fats or unsaturated fats (monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats) in your diet.
  - Canola, safflower, sunflower, soybean, peanut and olive oil and salad dressing and mayonnaise made with unsaturated fats (2-3 tbsp)
  - Almond butter and unsalted peanuts and peanut butter (2 tbsp)
  - Unsalted seeds/nuts (1/4 cup)
  - Soft, non-hydrogenated margarine made from unsaturated oils
  - Avocados (1/2)
- ✓ Avoid foods that are made with bad fats (trans, hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat).
  - Fried foods, such as pakora, samosa, pooria, deep fried chicken nuggets and French fries
  - Frozen prepared foods such as meat pies, pizza and waffles
  - Snack foods such as potato chips, cookies, donuts and crackers made with hydrogenated oils
  - Hard brick margarine and vegetable shortening made with hydrogenated oils
- ✓ Limit intake of sweetened food and beverages that can replace healthier foods.
  - Choose water or tea instead of sweetened beverages such as pop, speciality coffees and those labelled as drinks, cocktails or punches.

- Choose whole fruit or chopped vegetables instead of candies, chocolate, store bought cookies, cakes, pastries, donuts, pies or ice cream.
- ✓ Eat foods high in soluble fibre
  - Refer to the fabulous fibre handout
- ✓ Include soy protein in your diet
  - Refer to the protein handout
- ✓ Eat a handful (60 ml, ¼ cup) of unsalted nuts and seeds five or more times a week.
  - Try unsalted pumpkin, sunflower and sesame seeds, almonds, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, and peanuts
  - Eat them fresh or dry roasted and unsalted as a snack; add them to main dishes or salads; and use them in baking.
- ✓ Prepare foods using healthy cooking methods such as baking, steaming, broiling, roasting and stir frying in small amounts of unsaturated oil or fat. Limit deep frying food.
- ✓ Read food labels carefully.
  - Use the food label to choose products lower in saturated and trans fat
  - At restaurants, or when ordering take-out food, ask your server how foods are prepared so you can request changes if needed.
- ✓ Dietary Cholesterol
  - Cholesterol is not an essential nutrient. Your body can make what it needs. Most people do not need to count their dietary cholesterol intake for the day.
  - If you have high blood cholesterol levels, heart disease or a family history of heart disease or diabetes, speak to a registered dietitian or health professional to discuss how much dietary cholesterol you should eat on a daily basis.

**Triglycerides** are another type of fat in your body. High blood triglyceride levels can also increase your heart disease risk. If you have high triglyceride levels:

- ✓ Aim for a healthy body weight
- ✓ Eat more omega-3 fats, especially from fatty fish and omega-3 enriched foods
- ✓ Avoid sweetened food and beverages like cakes, donuts, soda pop and fruit drinks.
- ✓ Reduce alcohol intake to no more than 1 - 2 drinks per day or don't drink at all. Even one drink can increase triglycerides in some people.

Information adapted from the Dietitians of Canada and Practice-Evidence in Nutrition (PEN) Draft April 2017

Information provided by:  
 South Asian Health Institute | Fraser Health  
[www.fraserhealth.ca/sahi](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/sahi) | [southasianhealth@fraserhealth.ca](mailto:southasianhealth@fraserhealth.ca)

