

Cholesterol

Have you had your cholesterol levels checked lately? High cholesterol is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke -- and which kills more men and women each year than any other illness.

High blood cholesterol has no warning signs. People diagnosed with high cholesterol often feel fine and therefore may not take their condition seriously.

Have your cholesterol levels checked regularly. If your level is high, there are a lot of steps you can take to lower it.

If your cholesterol levels are high, these recommendations are very important steps for bringing your cholesterol under control. (And if your cholesterol levels are ok now -- congratulations! But these steps still help prevent heart disease down the road.)

We know that it can be tough to make changes to your lifestyle. Below are some guidelines for building healthy habits.

Choose foods low in saturated fat

Food labels are one of the best tools for eating healthy. In terms of lowering cholesterol, pay particular attention to these items on the label:

- total fat
- saturated fat
- cholesterol
- calories

Of these, the most important by far is saturated fat. (Calories are important for weight control, which is described later in this step.)

On the food label, look at the column called "%DV". This stands for "Percent Daily Value." As an example, if the food label "60%" next to saturated fat, that means you are getting 60% of that day's entire recommended allowance of saturated fat in just one serving of that candy bar. Keep track of what you eat over the day, and try to stay below a total of 100%.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 (20g)	
Servings per Container 2	
Amount per serving	
Calories 370 Calories from Fat 170	
% Daily Value *	
Total Fat 19g	29%
Saturated Fat 12g	60%
Cholesterol 15mg	5%
Sodium 250mg	10%
Total Carbohydrate 46g	15%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 33g	

Always look at the serving size

This product is HIGH in total fat and saturated fat. For each day, try to consume NO MORE than a total of 100% of these

Here are some other considerations about food labels:

- When looking at food labels, pay very close attention to serving size. These can fool you. At first glance, you might conclude that eating the whole product gives you 60% of your daily saturated fat -- but upon closer inspection of the food label, you can see that in this example a serving is actually half of the product. If you eat the whole container, you have now consumed over 100% of recommended saturated fat for the day. ($60\% \times 2 = 120\%$).
- The U.S. government came up with the %DV as a simple way to show the good and bad ingredients in a specific food. However, keep in mind that your individual weight and health risks make a difference in what you can or should eat. The %DV is based on a diet of 2,000 calories a day. You may need to eat more or less than 2,000 calories a day depending on your weight.
- Each day, your total of the "bad ingredients" (fat, cholesterol, sodium) should not go over 100%. In contrast, your total of the "good ingredients" (vitamins, fiber, protein) should be at least 100% each day.
- The %DV on the food label for TOTAL fat is something to watch, especially because it usually means high calories. It is not as important as saturated fat, however, because it also may include unsaturated fats, which are healthier.

More tips for healthy eating

- Choose lean, protein-rich foods such as soy, fish, skinless chicken, very lean meat, and fat free or 1% dairy products. Substitute soy protein for animal protein in your diet, particularly if you already have high cholesterol.
- Eat foods that are naturally low in fat, like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables (at least 5 servings per day) provides fiber and other important nutrients, including B vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants (like vitamin E, vitamin C, selenium, and beta-carotene).

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 Slice	
Servings per Container 22	
Amount per serving	
Calories	50 Calories from Fat 10
% Daily Value *	
Total Fat	1g 1%
Saturated Fat	0g 0%
Cholesterol	0mg 0%
Sodium	115mg 5%
Total Carbohydrate	10g 3%
Dietary Fiber	5g 20%
Sugars	1g

Always look at the serving size

This healthy, whole-wheat bread is low in fat and cholesterol

Fiber is a healthy nutrient, so you want AT LEAST 100% each day

- Increase soluble fiber in your diet by selecting foods like oats, bran, dry peas, beans, cereal, and rice. Fiber may also give you a sense of fullness so that you don't eat as much, making weight loss somewhat easier.
- Choose soft margarines (liquid or tub) over stick margarine to limit trans-fatty acids. Margarines made from plant sterols or stanols may be particularly useful for those who already have high cholesterol.
- Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids may reduce triglycerides, raise HDL levels, and reduce your risk of heart disease. Such food sources include cold-water fish (including wild salmon, tuna, and mackerel), fish oils, flaxseed and flaxseed oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and nuts (especially walnuts and almonds).
- Folic acid, also called vitamin B9, may help lower the risk of heart disease in those with high cholesterol.

Foods to avoid

- Limit your consumption of fried foods, processed foods, and commercially prepared baked goods (such as donuts, cookies, and crackers)
- Limit animal products like egg yolks, cheeses, whole milk, cream, ice cream, and fatty meats. These are all high in saturated fats.
- Look on food labels for words like "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" -- these foods are loaded with saturated fats and trans-fatty acids and should be avoided.

