



WELLNESS CENTER

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HYPERCHOLESTEROLEMIA (HIGH CHOLESTEROL)

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in your blood. Your body needs cholesterol to build healthy cells, however high levels of cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease. With high cholesterol, you can develop fatty deposits in your blood vessels. Eventually, these deposits grow, making it difficult for enough blood to flow through your arteries. Sometimes, those deposits can break suddenly and form a clot that causes a heart attack or stroke. High cholesterol can be inherited but may also be the result of unhealthy lifestyle choices. In some cases, high cholesterol can be preventable and treatable. A healthy diet, regular exercise, and sometimes medication can help reduce high cholesterol.

Diet and Lifestyle Tips

- Limit your intake of saturated fat. Saturated fat is solid at room temperature and often found in animal products, such as butter and red meat.
- Increase consumption of unsaturated fats, which are liquid at room temperature and often from plant sources. Try cooking with vegetable oils, such as olive, canola, sunflower and safflower
- Eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, walnuts, and ground flaxseed
- Avoid trans fats — they have been found to increase LDL or “bad” cholesterol levels. Trans fats were banned by the FDA in 2018.
- Select lean proteins such as chicken and turkey instead of red meat.
 - Remove the skin off your chicken and turkey to get a healthier option
- Cook and select food that is *baked, broiled, or grilled* instead of fried/deep fried
- After cooking ground meat, drain off any excess fat
- Engage in regular exercise. Strive for 150-300 minutes per week of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, and 2+ days per week of muscle-strengthening exercises.

Soluble Fiber Helps Lower Cholesterol

Dietary fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, and whole grains. These nutrient-dense foods provide two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Both types are important for good health. Getting adequate amounts of dietary fiber from a variety of foods is important for everyone. It is recommended that adults get between 25-34 g dietary fiber per day.

Research has shown that soluble fiber, from fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, and whole grains, may help to lower LDL cholesterol. In the stomach, soluble fiber forms a thick, jelly-like substance, which helps bind dietary cholesterol from foods consumed. The excessive cholesterol is then excreted and not absorbed by the body.

Load up on vegetables and fruits

- Select fruits and vegetables that are good sources of soluble fiber. For example, asparagus, brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, turnips, apricots, mangoes, and oranges are great sources.
- Try new recipes, cooking methods, and spice blends to make vegetables palatable
- Eat a variety of different colored fruits and veggies. Strive to eat all the colors of the rainbow as often as possible.
- Focus on more plant-based meals by including beans, lentils and soy foods.
- Aim to consume more whole forms of produce, which includes fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits.

Complications

If you have any questions or concerns about your cholesterol levels, please call the Wellness Center’s Dial-A-Nurse helpline at (773) 508-8883. To make an appointment with the Wellness Center dietitian you can also book online at <https://www.luc.edu/wellness/nutrition/appointmentservices/>.

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