

How to Naturally Lower Your Cholesterol

For those with high cholesterol, there are drugs called statins that are very effective in reducing cholesterol levels. Along with cholesterol reducing medications, there is increasing evidence that certain foods and supplements can also lower dangerous LDL cholesterol levels. Most health professionals agree that traditional medicine is best when it comes to safely lowering cholesterol. However, if your cholesterol levels are high, there are a number of foods that can help to lower your levels naturally and reduce your reliance on medications.

Soluble Fiber Has Been Proven to Lower Cholesterol

Oatmeal is one of the best foods for lowering cholesterol. It contains substantial amounts of soluble fiber, which has been proven to reduce LDL cholesterol levels. LDL cholesterol is the type of cholesterol that is thought to cause heart attacks, heart disease, and strokes. 10 grams of soluble fiber per day has been proven in clinical studies to lower cholesterol levels. Other good sources of soluble fiber include oat bran, psyllium husks, apples, peas, and pinto beans.

Whole Fruits and Grape Juice Can Reduce Cholesterol Levels

Instead of drinking fruit juices, eat whole fruits. Juice has sugar and antioxidants, but it lacks the soluble fiber found in many whole fruits that helps stop cholesterol absorption in the intestine. Blueberries in particular have been shown to lower cholesterol with a compound called pterostilbene which is similar to the resveratrol compound found in grapes and red wine.

Although it is better to eat whole fruits than drink juice, 100% grape juice has been proven to reduce cholesterol in clinical studies. The cardiovascular benefits of drinking red wine have been well publicized, but it has been shown that grape juice is just as effective at lowering cholesterol.

Resveratrol and flavonoids are the compounds in wine that are thought to help lower cholesterol levels, and these same compounds are present in grape juice. Also, wine has been thought to increase risks for other diseases when consumed beyond moderation, while grape juice has none of those risks. Grape juice made from red and dark purple Concord grapes has more of these beneficial compounds than white grape juice.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Found in Fish Have Cardiovascular Benefits

Omega-3 fatty acids have shown to decrease cholesterol levels in clinical studies as well. They reduce blood pressure and decrease the risk of clot formation in blood vessels. The highest levels of omega-3 fatty acids are found in trout, salmon, herring and sardines. Although tuna has high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, it also has high levels of mercury, and should not be consumed very often. Also if you don't like the taste of fish, flaxseed, canola oil, and fish oil supplements have the same health benefits as fish.

Avoid Trans Fat and “Bad” Saturated Fat

The overall idea behind naturally lowering cholesterol is to avoid the types of saturated fat that increase bad cholesterol (LDL) and lower good cholesterol (HDL) and to eat more of the foods that are proven to do the opposite. Trans fat in particular should be completely eliminated from the diet, as trans fat has been shown to increase bad cholesterol and lower good cholesterol at the same time. Walnuts, almonds, pistachios and some other nuts that contain large amounts of polyunsaturated fatty acids have been shown to reduce cholesterol. These nuts are a healthy replacement for other types of less healthy saturated fat such as high fat salad dressings and cheese.

A Few Simple Dietary Changes Can Keep the Heart Healthy

Along with the help of cholesterol reducing medication and a few simple dietary changes, cholesterol levels can be lowered naturally. And lowering cholesterol reduces the risk for a heart attack or stroke. It is recommended that even those without low cholesterol eat heart healthy foods as a preventative measure. With the scientifically proven cardiovascular benefits of natural foods like walnuts, blueberries, oatmeal, whole fruits, and red grapes, there are several options that can be added to a person’s diet for a more healthy heart.