

Lowering Cholesterol: Lifestyle Tips

Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Changes to Lower Cholesterol and Protect Your Heart

Making changes to your diet and daily habits can help lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease. Here are some simple, proven steps you can take:

1. Choose Heart-Healthy Foods

- a. Eat more fruits and vegetables (aim for at least 5 servings a day)
- b. Choose whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal, and whole wheat bread
- c. Include beans, lentils, and nuts in your meals
- d. Pick lean proteins such as fish, skinless poultry, and low-fat dairy
- e. Use healthy oils like olive or canola oil instead of butter or lard

2. Limit Unhealthy Fats

- f. Cut back on saturated fats found in red meat, butter, cheese, and other full-fat dairy. Try to keep saturated fat to less than 6% of your daily calories.
- g. Avoid trans fats, which are found in some processed foods, baked goods, and fried foods.
- h. Instead, use unsaturated fats (like those in nuts, seeds, avocados, and fish).

3. Reduce Salt and Added Sugar

- i. Limit salty foods and avoid adding extra salt at the table.
- j. Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugar.

4. Watch Your Portions and Calories

- k. Eat the right amount for your body's needs to help reach or keep a healthy weight.

5. Be Active

- l. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise (like brisk walking, biking, or swimming) each week. Try to be active most days.
- m. Add strength training (like lifting weights or using resistance bands) at least twice a week.

6. Other Healthy Habits

- n. If you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your heart.
- o. Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women and two for men.
- p. Try to manage stress with healthy activities like walking, yoga, or talking with friends.

7. Consider Special Diets

- q. The Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet are both proven to help lower cholesterol and protect your heart. These diets focus on plant-based foods, healthy fats, and lean proteins.

8. Get Support

- r. Meeting with a registered dietitian or joining a support group can help you make lasting changes.

Remember: Small changes add up. Even modest improvements in your diet and activity can make a big difference for your cholesterol and heart health.