

What is LDL-Cholesterol?

If you were asked to have your blood tested for cholesterol, your doctor wants to know your level of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, or LDL-C. LDL-C is the bad cholesterol that can build up in your arteries and cause a heart attack or stroke.

What can I do to lower my LDL-C?

What you eat and how active you are can help lower your LDL-C. A heart-healthy eating plan has a lot of plant foods, like legumes (cooked beans), nuts, fruits and vegetables, and also lean protein foods, low-fat dairy foods, and healthy fats (see ideas below).

Tips to Lower Your LDL Cholesterol

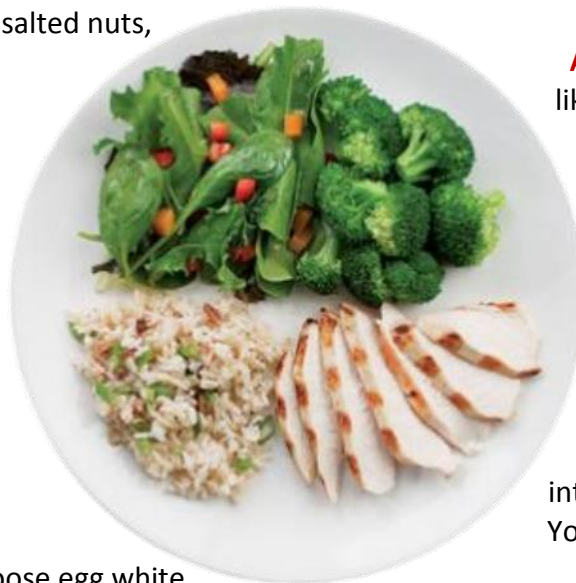
Replace foods high in saturated fat with foods that contain healthy fats.

Use canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, sesame, and soybean oils in place of butter and coconut oil. Use avocados, unsalted nuts, and seeds at meals and snacks. Avoid regular ground beef, fatty cuts of meat, and fast food hamburgers.

Avoid foods with trans fat by not buying foods with “partially hydrogenated oil” on the ingredient list. *Trans* fat are also found in deep fried foods.

Limit your cholesterol intake to less than 200 mg per day.

Limit egg yolks to 2–3 a week. Choose egg white and egg substitutes — they don't have cholesterol. Avoid organ meats like liver and gizzards and fatty cuts of red meat (beef, pork, and lamb).



Eat more foods rich in soluble fiber, like beans, peas, lentils, apples, oranges, pears, sweet potatoes, oats, oat bran, and ground flax seeds.

Avoid drinks sweetened with sugar, like soda, sweetened tea, fruit punch, and sport drinks, and sugary foods, like donuts, cookies, pies, pastries, and candy. This can also help you achieve a healthy weight.

Burn 2,000 or more calories each week by doing 200 to 300 minutes of moderate or higher intensity physical activity each week. You can do this by briskly walking for 30–45 minutes 5–7 days/week. If you have not been exercising at all, start with just a few minutes of light activity at a time.

Eating to Lower Your LDL-C Can be Easy

- Fill ½ your plate with colorful non-starchy vegetables like broccoli, kale, spinach, green beans, and carrots.
- Keep starchy foods to ¼ of your plate. Choose whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and fiber-rich whole-wheat bread. Choose healthy starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes or beans and peas.
- Make lean protein ¼ of your plate. Choose lean protein sources like fish, chicken and turkey with no skin, lean red meat, soy, lentils, and beans. Limit red meat, turkey, chicken, and fish or seafood to about 6 to 7 oz. each day.
- Have fresh fruit for dessert or a snack.
- Drink 1% or nonfat milk or eat nonfat yogurt for a snack.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.