

Low Cholesterol Diet Guide

A general reference for reducing dietary saturated fat and cholesterol to support heart health. Portion examples are general guidance, not a prescription - consult your physician or a registered dietitian for advice specific to you.

Bread, Cereals & Grains

What to Avoid	Preferred
White bread, refined pastries, and biscuits made with butter, lard, or shortening	Oats, barley, whole wheat bread, and whole wheat pasta; oats and barley supply soluble fiber, about 5-10 g/day can meaningfully lower LDL cholesterol

Meat & Poultry

What to Avoid	Preferred
Any internal organs of animals (liver, kidney, brain) - very high in dietary cholesterol	Skinless chicken or turkey breast and lean cuts (loin, round, sirloin) trimmed of visible fat, about 3-4 oz per meal
Fatty cuts of beef or pork (ribs, marbled steaks), poultry skin, and processed or deli meats	Red meat limited to a few times per week, with visible fat trimmed before cooking

Seafood

What to Avoid	Preferred
Fried fish and fried shellfish, and breaded or battered seafood in frequent large portions	Fatty fish rich in omega-3s - salmon, mackerel, sardines, albacore tuna - baked or grilled, 2-3 servings a week
	Shrimp and other shellfish in moderate portions; higher in dietary cholesterol but low in saturated fat, so can fit in moderation

Dairy & Eggs

What to Avoid	Preferred
Whole milk, cream, full-fat cheese, butter, and ice cream	Skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt, and low-fat cheese daily
Egg yolks eaten in unlimited amounts if cholesterol is a concern	Egg whites are cholesterol-free and can be eaten freely; whole eggs limited to about 4-5 yolks per week

Fats & Oils

What to Avoid	Preferred
Butter, lard, shortening, palm oil, coconut oil, and hydrogenated or trans fats (stick margarine, many fried fast foods)	Olive oil, canola oil, and avocado oil used in place of saturated fat, about 5-10% of daily calories from unsaturated fat

Nuts, Seeds & Legumes

What to Avoid	Preferred
Heavily salted, sugar-coated, or candy-covered nuts in large regular amounts	Almonds, walnuts, and peanuts, a small handful (about 1.5 oz) daily
	Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, and other legumes, about 1/2 to 1 cup, several times a week

Fruits & Vegetables

What to Avoid	Preferred
Vegetables fried in saturated fat (french fries, breaded and fried vegetables) in large amounts	All fresh fruits and vegetables eaten freely, 5 or more servings daily; apples, citrus, and okra are good soluble-fiber choices

Snacks & Sweets	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Pastries, doughnuts, and cookies made with butter or shortening, fried snacks, and ice cream	Fresh fruit, unsalted nuts, air-popped popcorn, and small portions of dark chocolate
Beverages	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Full-fat milkshakes, creamy coffee drinks, and specialty coffees made with whole milk or cream	Water, tea, and coffee with low-fat or plant-based milk
	Margarines or drinks fortified with plant sterols/stanols (about 2 g/day) may lower LDL by roughly 7-10%
Cooking Methods	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Deep-frying and pan-frying in butter, lard, or other saturated fats	Baking, grilling, steaming, and sauteing with a small amount of olive or canola oil
Condiments & Sauces	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Regular mayonnaise, creamy salad dressings, and cream- or butter-based sauces (alfredo, hollandaise)	Vinaigrettes, mustard, salsa, and hummus; low-fat or light mayonnaise in normal serving amounts
Cream-based gravies and cheese sauces used often on meals	Tomato-based sauces and broth-based gravies in normal serving amounts
Soups	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Cream-based soups (cream of mushroom, chowders) made with heavy cream or whole milk	Broth- or tomato-based soups and vegetable soups, most days of the week
Fast Food & Convenience Items	
What to Avoid	Preferred
Fried fast-food items, creamy pasta dishes, and pre-packaged meals high in saturated fat	Grilled or baked options, salads with light dressing, and homemade meals using unsaturated oils
	Reading labels for saturated fat and trans fat content when choosing packaged foods
Herbs, Spices & Seasonings	
What to Avoid	Preferred
	Garlic, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, basil, oregano, cinnamon, and most dried herbs - freely, as seasonings contain no cholesterol and little saturated fat

References

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