



The

Nutrition

Times

PREPARED MONTHLY BY LOCAL DIETITIANS FROM
ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES, NUTRITION SERVICES

Cholesterol and Heart Health

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a natural, waxy substance in your body that it needs in order to work properly. Sometimes you can have too much. Having high levels of blood cholesterol increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. When levels of fat and cholesterol become too high in the blood, they stick to the walls of the blood vessels and cause thickening called plaques. Build up of plaques, called atherosclerosis, is the cause of most heart attacks and strokes. Blood tests can be done to show the total amount as well as different types of cholesterol found in your blood.

Types of blood cholesterol

LDL (“bad” or “lousy” cholesterol)

- High levels of this LDL cholesterol plays a role in plaque build up on blood vessel walls and increases your risk for heart disease. Saturated and trans fats in your diet can increase your LDL cholesterol. Reducing the saturated and trans fats you eat can help lower your LDL cholesterol by 10-15%.

HDL (“good” or “healthy” cholesterol)

- High levels of this cholesterol in your blood can reduce your risk of heart disease. HDL helps break down and remove lousy (LDL) cholesterol from your body. Avoid trans fats because they may also decrease your HDL cholesterol.

Where is cholesterol found?

Cholesterol in your body

Your liver makes 75% of the cholesterol that is in your body.

Cholesterol in food

Cholesterol is also found in the foods we eat. Eating high amounts of cholesterol can raise your blood cholesterol. Foods that come from animals such as organ meats, dairy products, egg yolks and some shellfish contain cholesterol and saturated fats. Both saturated fat and trans fats (found in baked and processed foods) can also raise your blood cholesterol.

Decrease your risk of high blood cholesterol and heart disease: Choose foods with unsaturated fat and limit foods that are high in saturated, trans fats and cholesterol.

Healthy eating to lower your cholesterol

Reduce your intake of saturated and trans fats

Saturated fats come mainly from animal sources such as butter, cheese, meats, and tropical oils such as coconut and palm oils. Eat low fat dairy products, avoid processed meats, trim fat from meats, and limit portion sizes of meats.

Trans fats are made during a process called hydrogenation, where liquid oils are made into solid (hard) fats. They are found in hard margarines and commercially packaged products such as cookies, flavoured coffee creamers and donuts. Limit intake of these foods.

Choose unsaturated fats more often

Unsaturated fats may lower your LDL cholesterol when they replace saturated and trans fats in your diet. Liquid oils like olive and canola oil, ground flaxseed, nuts and nut butters, fatty fish, and non-hydrogenated (soft) margarines contain unsaturated fat.

Tips for choosing more unsaturated fats:

- Use vegetable oils such as canola or olive oil when cooking or baking
- Eat at least 2 servings of fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, trout, herring) per week
- Enjoy heart healthy nut butters on toast

Enjoy more soluble fibre

When eaten daily, soluble fibre can help lower your LDL cholesterol. Food sources include rolled oats and oat-based cereals, Kellogg's All Bran® and Guardian® cereals with psyllium, all fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds.

Tips for adding more soluble fibre to your diet:

- Look at the Nutrition Facts table to help you choose cereals and granola bars with at least 2 grams of fibre per serving
- Add beans, chick peas or lentils to soups, salads, casseroles and sauces
- Sprinkle nuts or seeds on cereals, salads or yogurt
- Add fresh, frozen or dried fruit to cereal, yogurt or baked goods



References: *Cholesterol, Triglycerides and Fats (AHS), Heart Healthy Eating (AHS), Prevention of Heart Disease and Stroke (AHS), Healthy Eating to Lower your LDL Cholesterol (AHS), Food Sources of Cholesterol (PEN)*

Living Healthy Program: Weight Management Series; call: [Medicine Hat 403-529-8969](tel:403-529-8969); [Brooks 403-793-6659](tel:403-793-6659)

[Medicine Hat:](#)

Feeding Tiny Tummies - Picky Eating Class Tuesday Feb 12th 7-9 pm at MH College. **FREE**; call to register at 403-502-8249

Baby and You – Feeding Babies: Introducing solids, making baby food. Community Health Services Wednesday Feb 27th from 10:30-11:45 am. **FREE**; Drop in.

[Brooks/Bassano:](#)

Infant Feeding class Feb 6th 9:30-11:30 am, **FREE**;

Picky Eating Class Feb 6th 1-3 pm, **FREE**;

Prenatal Nutrition Class (monthly) 7-9 pm. For all classes register at 403-501-3300.



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