

Six Simple Steps to manage your cholesterol



The wrong type of cholesterol can quietly build up in your arteries, increasing your risk of heart disease and stroke. The great news - you have the power to change this! Simple, everyday food choices can make a big difference.

===== Quick Wins =====

Start your day with porridge - oats contain beta-glucan fibre that can reduce how cholesterol you absorb

Embrace olive oil - swap butter for olive oil spread and use extra virgin olive oil for cooking and dressings

Add beans or lentils to 3-4 meals per week - swap meat for these cheaper, tasty, cholesterol-fighting alternatives

Try soya milk in your tea or coffee - soya protein can reduce cholesterol

Eat oily fish twice weekly - salmon, mackerel or tinned sardines all help to protect your heart

Snack on apples and pears - pectin fibre in the skin helps remove cholesterol from your body

WARNING: THESE QUICK WINS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN SUGAR, SATURATED FAT, PROCESSED FOODS AND REFINED CARBS ARE KEPT TO A MINIMUM!

Modern medicine is amazing. It can save lives and help us feel better. But when it comes to high cholesterol, pills such as statins only control the problem - they don't fix what's causing it. This is where food can make a big difference. The right food can not only stop 'bad' cholesterol building up in your arteries, it can even help reverse the damage that's already there. Food works differently to medicine - it tackles the root cause, not just the symptoms.

Change can be challenging - especially the big changes needed for big gains. For most of us it's easier to make lots of small changes, one at a time. Working through these tips and ideas will help new, healthy habits to get 'baked in' and become more likely to last - giving you better health today and for the rest of your life.

This guide allows you to take small steps towards lowering your cholesterol naturally, often within weeks. You don't need fancy supplements or extreme diets - just real, whole foods and a few smart swaps can help protect your heart.

Every healthy choice you make is like a small gift to your future self.

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1.

GLORIOUS GRAINS - OATS, BARLEY AND RYE

Why it works: Oats, barley and rye contain beta-glucan fibre that binds cholesterol in your gut and helps remove it from your body. Just one bowl of porridge daily can lower cholesterol by 5-10%. They're filling, cheap and versatile.

What to do:

- Have a bowl of porridge for breakfast (40-50g dry oats) - aim for 5 times weekly
- Top with berries, banana, nuts, seeds or a sprinkle of cinnamon
- Use any milk you prefer - soya milk adds extra cholesterol-lowering benefits
- Try rye grain, pearl or pot barley in soups, stews or casseroles
- Choose rye bread instead of white
- Use oat cakes or rye bread with hummus or nut butter for a snack

TOP TIP - Eating porridge daily can lower cholesterol by 5-10%. **It's one of the most powerful single changes you can make.**

Make it easy:

- Buy a big bag of oats and keep them somewhere obvious - like by the kettle
- Porridge takes just 3 mins in the microwave
- Try 'Overnight oats' if your mornings are rushed. Soak them overnight in a jar with a lid, top with fruit, nuts or seeds and eat them on the go.
- Toast rye bread slices from frozen for an quick and easy snack



2.

THE SUGAR CONNECTION

Sugar is the worst dietary offender for cholesterol balance and heart health. When you eat too much sugar, your liver converts it into fats and produces more LDL ("bad") cholesterol. High blood sugar also changes cholesterol particles, making them stickier and better at clogging arteries.

The problem:

- You can have the same cholesterol number on your test results but high sugar intake makes it much more dangerous
- Excess sugar raises blood fats significantly
- Sugar drives inflammation throughout your body including in your arteries
- 'Naked' carbs such as white flour, rice or pasta are quickly broken down into sugars
- Sugar is addictive! The good news is - like all addictions - the less you eat, the less you crave.

Simple swaps:

- Sugary drinks (THE biggest problem) ➔ Water, unsweetened tea or coffee, herbal teas
- White bread ➔ Wholemeal bread
- White rice ➔ Brown rice or quinoa
- Sugary cereals ➔ Porridge oats with berries
- Cakes and biscuits ➔ Oat cakes with nut butter or a couple of squares of dark chocolate (70%+)
- Fruit juice ➔ Whole fruit

TOP TIP - Reducing the amount of sugar in your diet not only **helps with your cholesterol** - it also **lowers your blood pressure** and **reduces your chance of becoming diabetic** - its a win win!

Make it easy:

- Cut out sugary drinks first - this is the single biggest change most people can make
- Check labels - sugar hides under many different names (glucose syrup, dextrose, maltose etc).
- Swap one refined carb for a wholegrain version each week - i.e white bread to wholemeal
- Choose whole fruit instead of juice - the fibre slows sugar absorption entry point

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FOCUS ON GOOD FATS

Not all fats are equal. Your body needs fat but the type matters. The trick is swapping types of fat - not just cutting it out. Choosing the right fats can stop cholesterol building up AND helps reverse damage that's already there.

Olive Oil:

Extra virgin olive oil is one of the most heart-friendly fats, linked to lower rates of heart disease, not just improved cholesterol.

Use extra virgin olive oil, walnut or avacado oils for salads or dipping bread

Use blended olive oil for frying and roasting

Oily Fish:

The fats found in oily fish are great for both heart and brain health

Try salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring or anchovies

Aim for oily fish twice per week

Nuts and Seeds:

Packed with healthy fats, fibre, vitamins and minerals

Have a small handful of unsalted nuts most days (about 30g)

Best choices: walnuts, almonds, pistachios, cashews or brazils

Sprinkle seeds on porridge, salads or yogurt (flaxseed, chia, pumpkin, sunflower)

TOP TIP - tinned oily fish such as sardines and mackerel are an incredibly cheap way to improve heart and brain health



Extra virgin olive oil is liquid gold when it comes to heart health - Try to make it your main fat.

THE FAT STORY: Your body needs fat for energy and to help you absorb vitamins - but animal fats can raise cholesterol while plant fats lower it. These swaps give your body the fat it needs while keeping your heart healthy.

Simple swaps:

Butter or lard ➔ Olive oil or rapeseed oil

Butter on bread ➔ Plant sterol spread such as Benecol or Flora ProActiv (if cholesterol is high) or dip bread in olive oil

Cream ➔ Greek yoghurt

Red meat (beef, pork, lamb) ➔ Oily fish, beans or chicken

Processed meats (bacon, ham, sausages) ➔ Fish, beans or chicken

Fried foods ➔ Baked, grilled or roasted with olive oil

Salted nuts or crisps ➔ Unsalted nuts

Make it easy:

Buy extra virgin olive oil and keep by your cooker - it costs about the same as butter

Buy tinned oily fish on your weekly shop - aim for twice a week

Keep a bag of unsalted nuts where you can see them for snacking

Buy plant sterol spread if your cholesterol is high - use it instead of butter

Try peanut butter, or other nut butters, on rye bread as a super heart-healthy snack

Choose baked or grilled when eating out

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4.

GET FULL OF BEANS!

Why it works: Beans and lentils contain soluble fibre that binds cholesterol in your gut and helps remove it from your body. Plus they are filling, cheap versatile and delicious!

What to do:

- Swap red meat for beans in bolognese, curry, soup or stews
- Try beans on a baked sweet potato - look out for hidden salt or sugar!
- Hummus is a double win made of beans *and* seeds - try with veg sticks or as a sandwich spread
- Try a simple, cheap and delicious bean salad for lunch instead of a sandwich
- Dried red lentils are one of the cheapest proteins available - throw a handful into your soup or curry whilst it cooks

TOP TIP: Beans and lentils are one of the **cheapest ways to lower cholesterol**. A tin of beans costs very little and each serving helps remove cholesterol from your body.

Simple swaps:

- Meat in bolognese ➡ Lentils or mixed beans
- Chicken in curry ➡ Chickpeas
- Meat in soup/stew ➡ Extra beans or lentils
- Sandwich filling ➡ Hummus with salad

Make it easy:

- Keep tins of different beans in your cupboard
- Start with beans on wholemeal toast - easiest entry point
- Make a big batch of bean chilli or lentil dahl - freezes well

MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

Eating a healthy, plant-rich diet makes an enormous difference to your health. When you add movement into the mix, the effect is even stronger. Even small amounts of exercise burns sugars and fats as fuel, rather than leaving them in the body as 'bad' cholesterol. Good food and regular movement are powerful ways to protect your heart from disease.



Soya beans and soya products help to lower your bad cholesterol

5.

TRY SOYA FOODS

Why it works: Soya protein works differently to other plant proteins. It tells your liver to produce less LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Having soya foods 3 or 4 times a week can help to lower cholesterol. It's an easy addition that works alongside all your other changes.

What to do:

- Soya milk - use in tea, coffee or on cereal (easiest swap)
- Tofu - add to stir-fries, curries or noodle dishes
- Edamame beans - steam as a snack or side dish
- Soya yoghurt - for breakfast or dessert

TOP TIP: You don't need to have soya every day - 3-4 times per week is enough to see the benefits. Many people find soya milk the easiest place to start.

How much?

Aim for about 25g of soya protein daily (roughly 3 servings):

- 1 glass of soya milk = 1 serving
- 100g tofu = 1 serving
- A bowl of edamame = 1 serving

Make it easy:

- Start by switching to soya milk in your morning tea or coffee
- Buy a block of tofu and try it in a stir-fry this week
- Try soya yoghurt with porridge and berries for breakfast
- Keep edamame beans in the freezer and add to salads, soups or stews.

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6.

PLANT POWER

Why it works: Fruits and vegetables are packed with soluble fibre that helps remove cholesterol from your body. They're also full of antioxidants that protect your arteries from damage. The more you eat, the better!

Best choices for improving cholesterol:

- Apples, pears, citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit)
- Berries (any type) - rich in antioxidants
- Eat whole fruit, rather than the juice
- Aubergine and okra - high in soluble fibre
- Leafy greens, broccoli, Brussels sprouts
- Any colourful veg counts - the more the merrier!

GO FOR GOLD: Five a day is a good start - aim for 7-10 portions per day! The more you can eat, the bigger the improvements to your health.

What's a portion?

- 1 apple, orange or banana
- A handful of berries
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables
- A bowl of salad

Make it easy:

- Eat the rainbow: Try and eat as many different bright coloured fruits and vegetables as possible. Try a different colour each day!
- Keep fruit visible on your counter for snacks
- Add veg to every lunch and dinner
- Frozen fruit and veg count - often cheaper
- Aim to fill at least half your plate with vegetables
- Snack on fruit instead of biscuits
- Add berries to your morning porridge

You don't need to go vegetarian - just try to fill at least half of your plate with colour - fruit, veg, beans, nuts or seeds - your heart will thank you

YOUR SUCCESS TIPS

Start small: Master one step before moving to the next. Even one change makes a difference!

Make it visible: Print this out and stick it on your fridge as a daily reminder.

Tell someone: Share your plan with family or a friend. Support helps!

Slip-ups are normal: Missed a day? No worries. Just start again tomorrow. It's about progress, not perfection.

Be patient: Reductions in 'bad' cholesterol take a few weeks to show. Stick with it!

Celebrate wins: Managed all 6 steps for a week? That's fantastic - treat yourself (but maybe not to sugary or deep fried snacks!)

Remember: Your cholesterol balance responds to every positive change - even small steps, made daily, can have big benefits: Start today, keep going, and your heart will thank you.

“It's not all or nothing. It's all or something.”

