

Do you want to lower your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol to decrease your risk of heart disease?

Reducing the cholesterol you eat from foods may lower the LDL cholesterol (LDL-C) in your blood. If you have heart disease, blockages in any arteries, a high LDL-C level, or diabetes, you should limit the cholesterol you eat from food to less than 200 mg/day. Plant foods do not have cholesterol. **Dietary cholesterol is only in animal products** like meat, dairy foods, and eggs. If you eat the amount of cholesterol found in 1 egg each day, your blood cholesterol will increase slightly and over time, which could raise your risk of heart disease. The risk of heart disease increases in people with diabetes who eat an egg or more each day.

What if you made changes to your eating habits and your LDL-C is still too high?

You may absorb too much cholesterol from food. Your doctor or registered dietitian nutritionist may suggest that you limit the cholesterol from food more and that you not eat egg yolks or other foods high in cholesterol at all.



Tips to Lower Your Dietary Cholesterol Intake – Choose a Heart-Healthy Eating Pattern

Choose lean sources of animal protein

foods – fish or seafood, chicken and turkey without skin, and lean cuts of beef or pork like tenderloin or sirloin. Limit lean animal protein foods to about 6 oz. to 7 oz. each day.

Eat foods with healthy fats. Choose vegetable oils (canola, corn, olive, safflower, sunflower), unsalted nuts, and avocados.

Reduce your saturated fat and trans fat from food.

Limit or avoid foods high in cholesterol.

Limit egg yolks to 2 – 3 per week.

Egg whites and egg substitutes have no cholesterol, so use those as often as you would like.

Avoid organ meats like liver, gizzards, and brain.

The amount of cholesterol in these foods is listed in the table.

Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.



Choose non-fat or low-fat dairy foods like milk, cheese, and yogurt.

Make a meal using plant protein foods at least once a week.

Plant protein foods are tofu, soybeans and other legumes (kidney beans, pinto beans, navy beans, lima beans, black-eyed peas, lentils, split peas).

Table 1. Foods High in Dietary Cholesterol

Food	Cholesterol (mg)
Egg yolk, one large	186
Beef liver, 3.5 oz.	396
Chicken liver, 3.5 oz.	564
Chicken gizzards, 3.5 oz.	370
Shrimp, 3.5 oz.	211

Making Meals Low in Dietary Cholesterol Can be Easy

Breakfast Ideas

- Whole wheat English muffin with peanut or almond butter
- Egg white omelet with veggies and low-fat cheese – limit egg yolks to 2-3 a week
- Plain non-fat Greek yogurt with fruit, ground flax seed, and chopped almonds

Lunch and Dinner Ideas

- A skinless chicken breast, grilled, and sliced over a bed of leafy green vegetables with balsamic vinaigrette dressing, and a small whole grain roll
- Baked salmon served with quinoa with roasted broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower
- Tofu and vegetables stir fried in canola oil over brown rice



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 a RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.