

## Adolescent-Young Adult Medicine

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### CHOLESTEROL: KEEPING it HEALTHY is SIMPLE

*Cholesterol* is a molecule that your body uses to manufacture enzymes and hormones. Therefore, it is perfectly *healthy and necessary to have good levels of cholesterol* in your blood. However, when levels of cholesterol get too high, the cholesterol may contribute, over many years, to the blockage of blood vessels in your heart, kidneys and other organs. Therefore, it is important, even during adolescence and young adulthood, to aim to keep your cholesterol levels in a healthy range. Some people are lucky to inherit healthy levels of cholesterol. Most people, however, should try to positively influence their cholesterol levels by *eating foods that are low in cholesterol and fat* and *preparing such foods in a healthy way*.

#### To lower your cholesterol: (It's really quite simple)

- Eat **less cholesterol**: cholesterol is found only in animal-derived foods such as meat, poultry and fish; eggs (in the yolk only); dairy products.
- Eat **less fat** and avoid saturated and trans-fats; **Unsaturated fats are healthiest** and mainly come from vegetables and fruits - such as olive oil, canola oil, corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil; *try to avoid palm and coconut oils; try to limit butter and margarine.*

#### Choose your foods wisely:

- Eat foods which contain **NO cholesterol and NO fat** as a **substantial part** of your diet; such foods include egg-white, most fruits, leafy green vegetables, peas and beans, and whole grains.
- Eat foods which are **LOW in cholesterol and fat**; these include **LEAN** meat, skinless poultry, most fish and shellfish and **NON-FAT and LOW FAT** dairy products (such as skim or 1% milk, low fat and non-fat yogurt, low fat cheese). *Limit ice cream and most cheeses.*

#### Cook, prepare, and dress your foods wisely:

- The healthiest ways to cook are to broil, grill, bake, roast, boil or microwave using small amounts of oil, such as olive or canola oil; *limit frying or sautéing and use small amounts of healthy oils; try to avoid using butter, margarine or cheese.*
- Use **small amounts** of dressing and sauces that are healthy-oil based. Use lemon juice, vinegar and mustard **freely**.

#### Check the Nutrition Facts Label on packaged foods:

Try to keep total daily cholesterol intake to under 200-300 mg and total daily fat intake to under 40-50 grams, and mostly unsaturated.

Consult *The Complete Book of Food Counts* by Corinne Netzer to learn the cholesterol and fat content of unpackaged foods.

Consult various websites for additional information and cooking ideas:

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org), [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org), [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncep...](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncep...) and others.

#### What are LDL, HDL, and Triglycerides?

Your **Total Cholesterol** consists of Low Density Lipoprotein-Cholesterol (LDL) and High Density Lipoprotein-Cholesterol (HDL); LDL ("bad" cholesterol) increases your risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and HDL ("good" cholesterol) protects against CVD. The proportions of LDL and HDL in your blood are primarily influenced by genetics but can be modified by healthy diet and exercise.

**Triglycerides** are another type of fat substance in your blood that independently influences your risk of cardiovascular disease. The best ways to lower triglycerides are to eat a low fat diet, limit sweets, sugary drinks, simple carbohydrates (non-whole grain starches), fried foods, and alcoholic beverages; maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly.

### **So, in summary, for a healthy heart and general good health...**

#### **Try to eat lots of:**

Lean meat, skinless poultry and fish, low fat dairy, egg whites, fruits and vegetables, high fiber whole grains, broth-based soups; foods that are grilled, boiled, and baked. (Vegetarians may choose from among these items.); Cheese-less or low fat cheese pizza is OK.

#### **Try to limit (or avoid):**

Fatty meats, poultry with skin, egg yolk; whole fat dairy, especially cheese and ice cream; cream-based soups; most types of pizza, large quantities of sauces or dressings, cakes and pastries; foods that are fried or sautéed.

#### **Also very helpful and important:**

- Regular exercise, at least 3-4 times a week for at least 30 minutes (daily, if possible)
- Maintain a healthy weight, which is much easier to accomplish when also following these recommendations for achieving healthy cholesterol and triglycerides levels.
- No smoking!!!!

#### **Try these healthy meals and snacks and learn to love them!**

##### ➤ **Breakfast:**

High fiber whole grain cereal with fruit and skim or low fat milk  
Low fat yogurt with fruit and high fiber whole grain cereal  
Egg white omelet with herbs and vegetables

##### ➤ **Lunch:**

Broth-based soup with veggies, beans, lentils and chunks of chicken breast  
Sandwich of lean meat (or grilled veggies) on whole grain bread with mustard  
Salad with protein (such as grilled chicken breast or shrimp; or low fat cheese and beans)

##### ➤ **Dinner:**

Grilled chicken breast, fish or lean meat with steamed veggies and salad (light dressing)  
Grilled chicken or veggies with side of baked potato or whole grain pasta/low fat sauce  
Stir-fry of veggies and tofu using modest amounts of olive oil (1-2 tablespoons)

##### ➤ **Snacks/Desserts:**

Fruit, non-fat or low fat yogurt or frozen yogurt, sorbet; whole grain bars