

What are plant sterols and why should you eat them?

Plant sterols are found in plants like vegetables, fruits, wheat germ, whole grains, beans, sunflower seeds, and many vegetable oils. Plant sterols can help lower your LDL-C or “bad” cholesterol. A high LDL-C can increase your risk of heart disease. Even though many plant foods have plant sterols, you may not eat enough plant foods to decrease your LDL-C. You may need to eat certain foods **supplemented** with plant sterols to get the recommended amount to lower your LDL-C.



How much plant sterol do I need?

Eating at least 2 grams (2,000 mg) of plant sterols each day may lower your LDL-C by 5 to 10%. To get 2 grams of plant sterols each day, you can eat foods with added plant sterols and plant sterol supplements. It is better if you eat plant sterols with meals or snacks during the day. This will help the plant sterols lower your cholesterol.

Tips on Choosing Plant Sterol-Containing Foods and Supplements

Plant sterols are found naturally in foods. Plant sterols are also added to foods or can be taken as a supplement.

Foods

Plant sterols are added to some foods, like margarine, orange juice, and cereals. Check food labels and ingredient lists to see if the food has added plant sterols.

Foods may not have enough plant sterols you need to lower your LDL-C. You might need to use both foods and supplements to reach 2 grams each day.

Foods with plant sterols have calories just as all food does. Be sure to count these calories in your daily meal plan so you do not add too many calories to your diet.

Talk with your registered dietitian nutritionist to find foods with sterols that work for you to lower your LDL-C.



Supplement Facts	
Serving Size 2 Softgels	
Servings Per Container 50	
Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Calories 10	
Calories from Fat 10	
Total Fat 1 g	2%**
Plant sterols/stanols (from esters) [*] 900 mg	*
<small>*Daily Value not established.</small>	
<small>**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet</small>	

Example of a label from a supplement that contains plant sterols.

Supplements

Supplements may not have the same amount of plant sterols in each pill. Read the label to find out how many pills you need to take to reach 2 grams (2,000 mg) of plant sterols each day.

You can take plant sterol supplements with foods that have added plant sterols to get 2 grams of plant sterols.

Only choose supplements that contain plant sterols, rather than those with other herbs/dietary supplements. It is okay to take a multivitamin that has no more than 100% of the vitamins and minerals you need a day.

Try to buy plant sterol supplements that have the “USP Verified” mark on the label.

What else do I need to think about when consuming plant sterols?

- Eating plant sterols may lower the absorption of some vitamins. Be sure to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, like spinach, kale, carrots, and sweet potatoes.
- There is no health benefit from eating more than 2 grams of plant sterols a day.
- You may see the words “plant stanol” or “phytosterol” on the food or supplement label. Both are plant sterols and will help lower your LDL-C.

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 an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.