



Heart Health – Why Cholesterol in Food Matters

Advice from the National Lipid Association Clinician’s Lifestyle Modification Toolbox

Why should I eat less cholesterol?

A diet that has less cholesterol can help lower your risk of heart disease. Eating fewer foods that are high in cholesterol can help lower LDL cholesterol (LDL-C) in your blood. A lower LDL-C helps lower your risk of heart disease. Cholesterol is only in foods from animals like red meat, chicken, fish and shellfish, milk and cheese, and egg yolks.

Some of these foods have more cholesterol than others. Some are higher in saturated fat. Saturated fat can increase your LDL-C more than cholesterol. Eating a diet that is heart-healthy will help you limit foods high in cholesterol. It will also help you limit foods high in saturated fat.

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

Tips to Eat Less Cholesterol – Choose a Heart-Healthy Eating Pattern

Choose small portions of lean animal foods

- Seafood
- Chicken and turkey with no skin
- Lean cuts of beef or pork like tenderloin or sirloin
- Limit to about 6 – 7 oz. each day

Make a meal using plant protein foods

- Beans like kidney, pinto, black and navy beans
- Black-eyed peas, lentils, and split peas
- Tofu, soybeans

Limit foods high in cholesterol

- Limit **egg yolks** to 2-3 per week (one at a time) if you have high LDL-C, diabetes, or heart failure
- Choose egg white and egg substitutes – they don’t have cholesterol
- Avoid organ meats like liver and gizzards

Eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains

- There is no cholesterol in vegetables, fruits, and whole grain foods

Choose non-fat or low-fat dairy foods

- Skim or 1% milk
- Low-fat cheese
- Non-fat or low-fat yogurt with no added sugar

Eat fewer foods with saturated fat

- Butter, whole milk, cheese
- Rib meat, sausage, and bacon
- Fat on red meat and chicken skin

Making Meals Low in Cholesterol

Breakfast Ideas:

- Whole wheat high fiber toast with peanut or almond butter and a banana
- Egg white omelet with veggies and low-fat cheese and a ½ grapefruit
- Plain non-fat Greek yogurt with fruit, ground flax seed, and chopped almonds

Lunch & Dinner Ideas:

- Grilled chicken breast with no skin on fresh spinach, 1 tbl. Balsamic vinaigrette, and topped with berries
- Baked salmon with quinoa and broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and berries
- Tofu and vegetables stir fried in canola oil over brown rice and an orange



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.