

Dietary guidance for lowering cholesterol

Cholesterol is a substance that is manufactured in the liver and also obtained from the diet. It occurs in all body tissues. Excess cholesterol, which usually accumulates as a result of eating the wrong foods, circulates in the blood and causes fatty deposits to build up inside blood vessels. Eventually the blood vessels can block and blood cannot flow through them. This may cause damage to the heart and can cause a heart attack. Blood cholesterol levels may be altered by changing the nature of dietary fat. By reducing the dietary intake of saturated fats, such as are found in meats and dairy produce, and replacing them with unsaturated fats a lowering of the blood cholesterol level results.

Eating tips

- Full cream milk should be substituted by skimmed milk.
- Use unsaturated margarine instead of butter, and use unsaturated oils (such as olive oil) instead of lard or dripping.
- Limit eggs to two a week.
- Cheese should be avoided, with the exception of low fat cottage cheese, which may be taken in unrestricted amounts.
- Lean cuts of meat should be selected and visible fat removed. Chicken and turkey (without the skin) and veal are preferable to other meats. Pre-prepared meals, hamburgers, meat pies and sausage rolls should be avoided.
- Eat more fish. White fish has a low fat content and the oil present in the tissues of dark fleshed or fatty fish is largely unsaturated.
- Try to avoid fried foods. Choose low-fat cooking methods, such as grilling, steaming or microwaving.
- Choose wholegrain (rather than white) bread, cereals, pasta and rice.
- Try to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Cut down on biscuits, cakes, sweets, crisps and chocolate.
- Drink plenty of water, unsweetened fruit juices and/or low calorie soft drinks. Coffee and tea with low fat milk should be taken in moderation.
- Alcohol may be taken in moderate amounts only.