Low-Cholesterol Guidelines

WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found only in animal fats. It is manufactured by the body and is essential to the functioning of the brain and many other organs. When eaten in excess, cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol levels or help form fatty deposits in blood vessel walls.

WHAT IS SATURATED FAT?

Saturated fats occur naturally in all foods of animal origin and in a few vegetable products such as coconut oil, palm or palm kernel oil, and cocoa butter (chocolate). Hydrogenated (hardened) fats such as vegetable shortening are also highly saturated. They are solid at room temperature and can also have the same harmful effects on your circulatory system as cholesterol.

WHAT ARE UNSATURATED FATS?

Unsaturated fats are fats of plant origin and are liquid at room temperature. Monounsaturated fats such as peanut oil, olive oil, and fish oils tend not to raise blood cholesterol levels and may even be beneficial in lowering them when used in place of saturated fats.

Polyunsaturated fats such as safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean, sesame, and canola oils tend not to raise blood cholesterol when used in moderate amounts.

HOW SHOULD I EAT?

- Eat more fish and poultry (with no skin, visible fat, or breading). Eat less red meat.
- Buy lean meat and trim all visible fat. Eat no more than 6 ounces (total cooked weight) of any meat, fish, or poultry each day.
- Limit intake of fried or fatty foods.
- Use low-fat dairy products such as skim milk, low- or non-fat yogurt, and low-fat cheese (try evaporated skim milk in your coffee instead of cream or nondairy creamers).
- Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Keep some ready to eat in your refrigerator for a healthy snack.
- Use heart healthy tub margarine or oils that are polyunsaturated rather than butter or vegetable shortening.
- Avoid excessive use of foods known to be high in cholesterol, such as egg yolk, liver, shellfish, duck, and goose. Limit egg yolks to no more than 4 per week.
- Include complex carbohydrate foods such as whole-grain breads and cereals, beans, rice, and pasta. They contribute needed fiber and are very low in fat.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

- Remember to check all labels. Many foods contain hidden fats!
- Bake, broil, or roast meat rather than frying them. Skip gravies and rich sauces.
- Limit intake of rich pastries and desserts that are high in butter, eggs, cream, or shortening.
- Choose a frozen fruit sorbet or low- or non-fat frozen yogurt rather than ice cream. (Some sherbets may contain whole milk, so check labels carefully!)
- Use a “nonstick” cooking spray or “nonstick” pans.
- Chill and skim fat off of meat stock or drippings when making soup or sauces.
- Check labels for the words “hydrogenated” or “hardened” fats or oils, and avoid these products.

ARE THERE OTHER TERMS YOU MAY HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT?

HDL's (high-density lipoproteins) and LDL's (low-density lipoproteins) transport cholesterol in your blood. LDLs carry cholesterol into your cells and HDLs carry it away and dispose of it in the liver, having a protective effect on your circulatory system. High saturated fat, high cholesterol diets may increase the harmful LDL's. Not smoking, participating in aerobic activity, and losing weight if you are overweight may increase the

beneficial HDL's.

Triglycerides (TG) are fatty compounds. Body fat is made up of mostly stored triglycerides. Triglycerides also circulate in the blood stream like cholesterol, and may have a link with heart disease. To lower triglycerides, maintain ideal body weight, limit intake of sugars and alcohol, and eat a low-fat diet.

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