

[Home](#) ▶ [Articles](#) ▶ [Health and Beauty](#) ▶ [Dietary Tips to Reduce Cholesterol](#)

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## Lower Cholesterol Naturally

### Six Tips for a Low Cholesterol Diet Plan from Maharishi Ayurveda

BY LINDA EGENES

Are you one of 98.6 million Americans today who has elevated total blood cholesterol levels? If high cholesterol is left unchecked, you may be at risk for heart disease, stroke, and hypertension.

Right, you may think. I've heard all this before—I should eat less fat. Yet according to Vaidya Manohar, a Maharishi Ayurveda health expert, a certain amount of fat is important for keeping the brain and body functioning properly.

"Balancing cholesterol may be more a matter of eating the right kinds of fats in the right amounts for your body type," he says. Here are six dietary tips for keeping your cholesterol in balance the ayurvedic way.

**1. Reduce toxins by eating foods that lower cholesterol.** The liver not only produces cholesterol, it's also part of the digestive system. It's the place where toxins are screened before they enter the bloodstream. If the liver becomes overloaded with toxins, its functioning can become impaired and toxins can enter the body. When toxins mix with the fat tissue, it changes the quality of cholesterol. This mixing of toxins with fat tissue is the main cause of high cholesterol.

There are two kinds of toxins: environmental and digestive. To avoid environmental toxins, drink pure water, avoid air pollution, and avoid exposure to harmful chemicals. Eat organic vegetables, as these are grown without chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and thus protect the body from toxic overload.

The other kind of toxin is called ama, and is caused by weak or incomplete digestion. To strengthen your digestion, eat fresh whole foods and cooked foods and avoid leftover, processed, canned, or frozen foods.

The way you eat also affects digestion—eat your main meal at noon, when digestion is at its peak. Eat lighter at breakfast and dinner. And try eating your meals at the same time every day—your digestion will thrive on a regular routine.

**2. Avoid bad fats like the plague.** Certain fats are impossible to digest and cause ama. Take the modern invention of trans fats (also known as hydrogenated vegetable oils). These have been formed by adding hydrogen to liquid fats to make them more solid, adding to shelf life and taste. Used in fast foods and most processed foods, they are blamed for rising cholesterol levels.

Another kind of bad fat, saturated fats—found in butter, hard cheeses, coconut and palm oils, red meat, and chicken skin—should also be avoided. Difficult to digest, they cause imbalances in cholesterol production.

**3. Eat Good fats.** The best good fats for nourishing the brain and body alike are olive oil and ghee. Ghee (clarified butter, made from simmering butter for an hour and separating out the milk solids) is by far the ayurvedic favorite, because it is *medhya*, or brain-enhancing, while also being more easy to digest. Ghee provides essential fatty acids, vitamin A, and vitamin C. It's also practical—it can be heated at high temperatures without destroying its nutritional qualities. This makes it a good choice for baking and sautéing foods.

Olive oil is the other good fat recommended. It's a mono-unsaturated fat that lowers cholesterol and triglycerides. But it's important to choose cold-pressed, extra-virgin olive oil, which means that the oil is pressed from the olives without heat or unnatural processing. This ancient method of processing doesn't destroy the nutritional quality of the oil. It's also important not to heat olive oil at high temperatures for cooking. If you need to heat the oil at higher temperatures, it's better to use ghee.

**4. Eat for your body type.** How much fat you need depends on your body type and health needs. For people with high cholesterol, it's usually recommended to follow a Kapha-pacifying diet and daily routine. This means avoiding sweet, sour, and salty tastes. Stay away from heavy, fried, or fatty foods, and eat very small amounts of good fats. Eat more pungent, bitter and astringent foods, such

as spiced, freshly cooked green vegetables, to tone the digestion and stoke the digestive fire.

#### **Cholesterol Lowering Spice Mixture**

- 3 parts ground turmeric
- 6 parts ground cumin
- 6 parts ground coriander
- 6 parts ground fennel
- 2 parts ground fenugreek
- 1 part dried powdered ginger
- 1 part ground black pepper

Combine and store in a sealed container. When preparing your meal, sauté a teaspoon of spices in a small amount of a ghee or olive oil. Combine with vegetables or grains to give them a satisfying flavor and to enhance digestion.

**5. Take herbal supplements.** Specific formulas used to lower cholesterol naturally help improve bile production, strengthen liver function, improve fat metabolism, and flush cholesterol from the elimination system, thus helping produce lower cholesterol levels and preventing disease.

For more information on herbs for health, visit [www.mapi.com](http://www.mapi.com).

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