



Welcome to  
**Wellness Online**  
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## September is National Cholesterol Awareness Month

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### Cholesterol Screening: Why Is It Important to Have a Cholesterol Test?

Cholesterol builds up silently, slowly choking off blood supply to your heart and brain.

You see TV commercials, magazine ads, and pamphlets in your doctor's office—all proclaiming the dangers of high cholesterol. But you feel healthy, and have never worried about your cholesterol or heart problems. So, why do you need to have a cholesterol test?



#### What is cholesterol and how does it affect me?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that your body needs to function. Your body makes some cholesterol because it is needed to form cell membranes, some hormones and bile acids (which digest fat), for example. But people consume extra cholesterol through foods, especially animal foods like meats and dairy products. Trans-fats also raise cholesterol. Trans-fats are found in processed foods.

When there is too much cholesterol in your blood, it can build up on the inside walls of your arteries. Over time, this cholesterol buildup, or plaque, can narrow the space for blood to flow through. This can happen in the arteries everywhere in the body. It is most dangerous, though, in the arteries that feed the heart, brain and other vital organs. When plaque narrows the coronary arteries, it can cause chest pain, shortness of breath and other symptoms of coronary heart disease. If a clot forms on the plaque, it can block the blood flow to the heart muscle, causing a heart attack. If a clot blocks the flow of blood to the brain, it can cause a stroke.

The higher your cholesterol level, the greater your risk of heart disease and stroke. Given that heart disease is a top killer of men and women in the U.S., this is not a risk that you should ignore. But, eating a heart-healthy diet, being physically active and losing weight are things everyone can do to help lower their cholesterol levels and their risks.

## Types of Cholesterol

Your doctor may order tests to check your blood levels of cholesterol. Because cholesterol can't dissolve in the blood (it's not water-soluble), it doesn't circulate by itself. Instead, cholesterol travels through the bloodstream linked to "carriers" called lipoproteins.

There are three different types of lipoproteins. The two that are most important to remember in terms of your risk of heart disease are high-density (HDL) and low-density lipoproteins. (LDL)

- **LDL.** Cholesterol that is carried on low-density lipoproteins is called LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol). Higher levels of LDL cholesterol are linked to an increased risk for heart disease. LDL is the main carrier of cholesterol to body tissues.
- **HDL.** Cholesterol that is linked to high-density lipoproteins is called HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol). If you have higher levels of HDL cholesterol, you're at lower risk for heart disease. HDL carries cholesterol away from body tissues.

## Why test?

Cholesterol buildup can prevent enough blood from flowing to the heart muscle. It is the most common cause of coronary heart disease and happens so slowly that you are not even aware of it. This plaque can rupture, forming a blood clot that leads to a heart attack or stroke. The higher your LDL cholesterol, the greater your chance of heart attack or stroke. This is why cholesterol screening is so important. Cholesterol can build up for many years before any symptoms develop. So, you can feel healthy and not realize you have high cholesterol.



## How Soluble Fiber Affects Your Cholesterol

Soluble fiber is where it's at for helping to get your cholesterol under control. Check out sources and ideas for how to include this fiber in your diet!

If you have high cholesterol, your doctor has likely told you to follow a heart-healthy diet. Aside from cutting back on dietary cholesterol, unhealthy fats and salt, you were probably also told to increase your fiber intake.

But how much fiber is enough? And what type of fiber is best for helping to get your cholesterol under control?

## Soluble fiber to the rescue

There are two main types of fiber: insoluble and soluble. Both have health benefits, but *only soluble fiber lowers the risk of heart disease*. Soluble fiber dissolves into a gel-like substance in the intestines. This helps to block cholesterol (specifically, "bad" LDL) from being absorbed. Soluble fiber can also help to regulate blood sugar for people with diabetes.

Research has shown that people who raise their soluble fiber intake by 5 grams to 10 grams a day have about a 5 percent drop in their LDL cholesterol. And eating as much as 10 grams to 25 grams a day can lower your LDL even more.

Most foods have a combination of both types of fiber. Because food sources vary greatly, choose soluble fiber foods carefully to get the highest amount possible.

## Fiber grams in foods

Not sure how much fiber you're getting from food? The following chart can help you plan how to fill your daily quota and lists soluble fiber amounts along with the total amount of fiber.

Remember, your goal is to aim for at least 5 grams to 10 grams of soluble, and a total of at least 25 grams to 30 grams (or more) of total fiber per day.

Whole Grain Cereals (1/2 cup cooked)	Soluble	Total	Fruit (1 medium except where noted)	Soluble	Total
Barley	1	4	Apple	1	4
Oat Meal	1	2	Banana	1	3
Oat Bran	1	3	Blackberries (1/2 cup)	1	4
Psyllium Seeds (1 Tbsp.)	5	6	Citrus (orange, grapefruit)	2	3
Legumes (1/2 cup cooked)	Soluble	Total	Nectarine	1	2
Black Beans	2	5.5	Peach	1	2
Kidney Beans	3	6	Pear	2	4
Lima Beans	3.5	6.5	Plum	1	1.5
Navy Beans	2	6	Prunes (1/4 cup)	1.5	3
Northern Beans	1.5	5.5	Vegetables	Soluble	Total
Pinto Beans	2	7	Broccoli	1	1.5
Lentils (yellow, green, orange)	1	8	Brussels Sprouts	3	4.5
Chickpeas	1	6	Carrots	1	2.5
Black-eyed peas	1	5.5			

## Getting your daily dose

As always, the trick is to find ways to work these delicious foods into your everyday meal plan. Here are some tips to get you started.

- Have a bowl of oatmeal or oat bran for breakfast or a mid-afternoon snack. Add walnuts for crunch, plus a dash of cinnamon and a teaspoon of maple syrup for flavor.
- Mix psyllium seeds into oatmeal, a smoothie or yogurt.
- Make a split pea or lentil soup on the weekend and serve for lunch or dinner.
- Rinse off canned kidney beans and add a half cup to your salad.
- Toast cooked garbanzo beans and eat as a snack.
- Mix black, Lima or pinto beans into rice for a tasty side dish.
- Add barley to soups instead of pasta.
- Snack on high soluble fiber fruits such as oranges, grapefruits, pears and apples.
- Add banana to your morning cereal.
- Mix prunes into oatmeal for breakfast or simply snack on them with a handful of walnuts.
- Sauté Brussels sprouts in a pinch of olive oil and garlic and add a dash of salt, pepper and Parmesan cheese to taste.

Finally, remember that many commercial oat bran products (muffins, chips, waffles) actually contain very little fiber. They may also be high in sodium, total fat, saturated and trans-fat. Make sure to read the labels on all packaged foods before you make your selection.

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## Short Workouts Can Be Good for Your Heart

### What's not to love about that?

Most people know that exercise is important for heart health. However, not everyone knows just how much exercise is enough. Is it 15 minutes a day? 30 minutes? 1 hour? It's time to set the record straight!

The recommendation is that all adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. At a minimum, aim for at least 10 minutes at a time. After that, it's your choice. You could do 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Or two 15-minute sessions a day, five days a week. Or three 10-minute sessions a day for five days.

Be sure to do activities that will strengthen your muscles, too. Look for moderate or high-intensity activities that work all your major muscle groups at least two days a week. The major muscle groups are: legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms.

### Yes, 10 or 15 minutes at a time is okay

Short bursts of activity can, in fact, help your heart. And most people should be able to carve out 15 minutes twice daily or 10 minutes three times daily for heart-healthy physical activity.

Exercise can lower your risk for heart disease by reducing heart disease risk factors. Physical activity can actually lower your blood pressure by as much as some medications. It can also increase your levels of good cholesterol.

Exercise can even improve your blood circulation, which may also reduce your risk for heart disease. For women, regular moderate aerobic exercise is thought to reduce heart disease risk by 30-40 percent.

### Making short workouts count

Regular aerobic exercise strengthens your heart.

You can get a moderate-intensity aerobic workout from many activities, like:

- Biking
- Brisk walking
- Doubles tennis
- Dancing
- Water aerobics

What's most important is that you simply get moving! In addition to doing what you typically think of as "exercise," you can also get physical activity from your everyday routine. General gardening counts. So does house cleaning, yard work or washing your car. Just be creative and move more!

### Check with your doctor first

It can be overwhelming to know where to start if you haven't exercised much before, or you haven't exercised in a while. If you are physically inactive or you have a health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, pregnancy or other symptoms, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program or increasing your activity level. He or she can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe and suitable for you.



## Source4Women Online Seminars

### Be a Better Cook

Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD

September 13, 2016 – 12:30 p.m. ET, 11:30 a.m. CT, 10:30 a.m. MT, 9:30 a.m. PT

You don't need culinary school. You don't need expensive equipment. You don't even need that much experience. All you need to help you be a better cook today is a little bit of kitchen know-how, a well-stocked kitchen and the desire to enhance your cooking skills. Join us for this seminar to get inspired, learn a few tricks of the trade, tips, and begin mastering the art of healthy, delicious cooking just like a pro!

To register for an upcoming Source4Women online seminar, visit [www.source4women.com](http://www.source4women.com) and click on "Online Seminars & Events." All seminars are recorded and archived for viewing after the live seminar date.

## September Health Tip

Check out more cholesterol facts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention along with the recommended levels for the different types of cholesterol by clicking [here](#).



## Test Your Health Care Knowledge!

Test your health care knowledge with our September activities:

1. Take a quiz and learn how you may avoid cost surprises.
2. Play the concentration game and match UnitedHealthcare programs and tools with their definitions.
3. Complete a puzzle and learn tips to understand the UnitedHealthcare Health4Me app, your health plan ID card or [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com)®.

Participate in one or more of the activities for a chance to win a \$400 Visa gift card! Click [here](#) to get started!

## September Healthy Recipe: Blissful Banana Mousse

This creamy dessert is low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.

### Ingredients:

2 T low-fat (1 percent) milk  
 4 tsp sugar  
 1 tsp vanilla  
 1 medium banana, cut in quarters  
 1 cup plain low-fat yogurt  
 8 banana slices (1/4-inch)

### Directions:

Place milk, sugar, vanilla and banana in blender. Blend for 15 seconds on high until smooth. Pour mixture into a small bowl. Fold in yogurt. Chill. Spoon into dessert dishes. Garnish each with 2 banana slices just before serving.

**Yield:** 4 servings (1/2 cup each)

### Nutrition Facts:

Calories: 94  
 Fat: 1g  
 Saturated Fat: 1g  
 Cholesterol: 4mg  
 Sodium: 47mg



Recipe Source: **myOptumHealth**

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