

# MANAGING CHOLESTEROL WITH GOOD NUTRITION

## HELP MANAGE YOUR PATIENT'S CHOLESTEROL

Simple, straightforward dietary advice has the potential to help lower LDL and total serum cholesterol in at-risk patients and therefore reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.



This advice can be provided to patients by itself or in conjunction with pharmaceutical intervention dependent on the level of risk and the desired level of serum cholesterol reduction.

Patients may not be aware of the differences between types of cholesterol (LDL vs. HDL) or that saturated fats contribute significantly more to raising LDL cholesterol levels than dietary cholesterol<sup>1</sup>.

Clear, simple and straightforward dietary advice is welcomed by patients and can be delivered effectively by health professionals in the practice setting. The supporting patient information leaflet 'Managing cholesterol through good nutrition' can be provided to patients to reinforce the messages provided during a consultation.

### EXPLAINING CHOLESTEROL TO YOUR PATIENTS

Cholesterol is an essential fat carried in the blood and has a range of uses that support a healthy body. Put simply, there are two main types of cholesterol:

- HDL - 'good' cholesterol
- LDL - 'bad' cholesterol

Although essential for good health, an oversupply of total LDL cholesterol (higher than 2.5 mmol/L) can result in hypercholesterolemia or 'high cholesterol' a condition treatable with lifestyle changes and medication where required.

### PATIENTS CAN IMPROVE THEIR CHOLESTEROL LEVELS WITH THESE SIMPLE STEPS

#### Reduce saturated fats from the diet

Advise patients to adopt a cardio-protective diet which:

- Is high in fruit and vegetables – recommend two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables per day
- Includes sources of unsaturated fat from nuts, seeds, avocado, oils made from plants or seeds such as sunflower, canola, soybean, olive, sesame and peanut oils, and oil based spreads
- Replaces refined carbohydrate foods with low glycaemic index (GI) carbohydrates and wholegrains, including oats and barley
- Includes lean protein sources such as meat and chicken (trimmed), low or reduced-fat dairy foods (milk, cheese and yoghurt) and soy based foods
- May include plant sterol enriched margarines for additional cholesterol control

Some easy tips to start with are limiting the amount of cakes, pastries and biscuits in the diet and having reduced fat dairy products and lean meat options.

LIMIT SATURATED FATS
butter
fried foods
fatty meats
biscuits
cakes
cream

CHOOSE HEALTHY FATS
unsalted nuts and seeds
olive, canola, sunflower, soybean, sesame and peanut oils for cooking
oily fish
eggs
lean red meat and poultry (trimmed)
avocado

### THE BIGGER PICTURE – CHOLESTEROL IN AUSTRALIA<sup>2</sup>

- High blood cholesterol is common and based on a total cholesterol level of 4.0 mmol/L or LDL >2 mmol/L
- High LDL cholesterol, particularly when combined with other risk factors, is linked to an increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke which accounts for much of the burden of disease in Australia
- About 80% of the burden is related to premature deaths and 20% to disability
- Genetic factors can affect blood cholesterol, severely in some individuals, but for most people saturated fat in the diet is the main dietary related factor that raises serum cholesterol levels

Some healthy whole foods contain dietary cholesterol which has no adverse effect on serum cholesterol levels and can be eaten as part of a healthy well balanced diet, low in saturated and trans fats. Many of these foods provide far more benefits by being included in a person's diet, than being left out.

**Eggs** – a single egg contains 11 important vitamins and minerals, is a great source of protein and has only a small amount of saturated fat (1.7g). *The Australian Dietary Guidelines* maintain that the everyday consumption of eggs is not associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease<sup>3</sup>.

**Seafood** – prawns, fish and other seafood contain some cholesterol but they are low in saturated fat and also contain healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

**Dairy products** – dairy foods are an important part of the daily diet and contribute many essential nutrients, especially calcium. Switching to low or reduced-fat versions will reduce a patient's intake of saturated fats.



## Get moving

People who do not exercise and spend most of their time sitting/lying down have significantly higher levels of LDL (bad cholesterol) and lower levels of HDL (good cholesterol). Weight



loss has been shown to impact positively on cholesterol, lowering LDL and total cholesterol while increasing HDL levels<sup>2</sup>, and also helps to reduce blood pressure.

## Quit smoking

Smoking has a significant effect on increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

## Limit alcohol

People who consume large amounts of alcohol regularly generally see an increase in their blood pressure, compared to people who abstain or those who drink in moderation<sup>3</sup>. It is recommended that no more than two standard alcoholic drinks are consumed on any one day<sup>3</sup>.

## Explaining The Difference Between Blood And Dietary Cholesterol

Serum cholesterol is made by the body and dietary cholesterol is present in some foods.

A number of studies have investigated the effects of dietary cholesterol on serum cholesterol levels. They have found that dietary cholesterol has little effect on blood cholesterol and that diets high in saturated fat have a greater impact on a person's blood cholesterol levels and associated health risks, than the intake of dietary cholesterol alone.

Please visit [www.enc.org.au](http://www.enc.org.au), the Harvard School of Public Health, RACGP and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Dietary Guidelines websites for additional information.

1. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-full-story/index.html#cholesterol>
2. <http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/200906/200906clifton.pdf>
3. National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Dietary Guidelines

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## CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH YOUR PATIENTS

*"Let's take a look at your diet and what simple steps you can take to improve your cholesterol levels"*

*"You can eat these to lower your 'bad' cholesterol levels"*

*"Lifestyle changes can reduce your cholesterol levels"*



Eggs have the Tick because they are a nutritious food. The Tick helps all Australians make healthier food choices.

The Tick is not designed for the treatment of health issues. People with health concerns should seek dietary advice from their doctor or dietitian