

EATING FOR A HEALTHY HEART

A PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET ON CHOLESTEROL

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat (lipid) that is carried around the body in the blood and is needed for some essential body functions. There are 2 main types of cholesterol: HDL (high density lipoprotein) and LDL (low density lipoprotein). Both are essential, but a high LDL or total cholesterol level suggests a greater risk to your heart health.

What does a high cholesterol mean?

A high cholesterol level is usually referred to as hyperlipidaemia or hypercholesterolaemia and is a risk factor for heart disease. The level of cholesterol that is considered high for you will depend partly on whether you have any other risk factors for heart disease, for example, a high blood pressure, a family history of heart disease, and whether you are overweight or smoke. Your doctor or healthcare professional will be able to advise you of your current and ideal cholesterol level.

How can I reduce my cholesterol?

Many factors can affect your cholesterol level and your risk of heart disease. In some people a high cholesterol level may be due to hereditary factors; however your body weight and diet can also affect your levels. The best approach is therefore to:

- 1. Lose weight if you are overweight.** If you need advice to help with weight loss look at the 'Help with weight loss' section of our website - link below
<http://www.lnds.nhs.uk/PatientsandPublic-DietandLifestyleAdvice-HelpwithWeightLoss.aspx>
- 2. Follow a cardio-protective diet.** The main things to try and do are to (your health professional will have more detailed information if you need it):
 - **Eat more fish, especially oily fish** -such as sardines, herring, mackerel and salmon. Aim to eat a couple of portions of fish a week, and make one of these an oily fish
 - **Eat a diet low in total fat** by choosing reduced fat varieties of milk, cheese, margarine, yogurts etc, limiting your intake of cakes, biscuits, sweets, chocolate and pastries, and using low fat cooking methods.
 - **Choose healthier fats.** Replace saturated fat with a monounsaturated and polyunsaturated choices. Look at labels to help you. Aim for less than 1.5g saturates per 100g.
 - **Avoid foods containing *transfats*.** These are found in processed foods like biscuits, cakes, fast foods and pastries.
 - **Eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day.**
 - **Eat more high fibre foods.** Choose more wholegrains, including oats and pulses (beans, peas, lentils) in your diet.

Reducing your total fat intake will help with weight loss. If you are already a healthy weight you will probably need to eat more starchy foods such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes (preferably high fibre varieties) to help maintain your weight.