

10 Ways to Lower Your Cholesterol Without Taking Drugs

Some 36 million Americans now take statin drugs—and thanks to the newly released national cholesterol guidelines, this number could skyrocket.

Top cardiologist Chauncey Crandall says this is not welcome news.

“These new guidelines broaden the groups of people who will be urged to take statins, so this will probably result in millions of people being put on a drug they don’t need,” says Crandall, director of preventative medicine and clinical cardiology at the Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

While he credits statins with helping to drive down the incidence of heart disease, Crandall worries that people who have only mild cholesterol problems will be put on statins for the rest of their lives. He believes that these problems should be addressed with lifestyle change for better and more lasting results.

“High cholesterol runs in a family of other problems which travel together. If you take a statin, you’re attacking only cholesterol, but it does nothing to remedy other problems, like obesity, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome,” says Crandall, author of the No. 1 Amazon best-selling book *The Simple Heart Cure: The 90-Day Program to Stop and Reverse Heart Disease*.

Dr. Crandall recommends the following steps to lower cholesterol without drugs:

- 1. Change your diet.** A plant-based diet, which includes large

amounts of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, along with meat substitutes like beans, lowers cholesterol naturally.

2. Take a plant sterols supplement. Plant sterols, also known as plant stanols, are the plant version of cholesterol, and when consumed in sufficient amounts they block the absorption of human cholesterol in the small intestine. There are products that have plant sterols, like special margarines, but they also contain chemicals, so you're better off with a two-gram daily supplement.

3. Start your day with oatmeal. Oatmeal is the best food defense against cholesterol. The reason is that oatmeal contains soluble fiber, which turns into a gel in the body, which helps you feel full and also interferes with the digestion of cholesterol, whisking it out of your body. Oat bran and cold oat cereals, like Cheerios, do this as well.

4. Get 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Sleep deprivation hikes low-density LDL cholesterol (known as the "bad" cholesterol), contributes to high blood pressure and leads to overeating. If you snore or find yourself excessively sleepy during the day, get checked for the common and dangerous sleep disorder known as sleep apnea.

5. Check your vitamin D level. Vitamin D deficiency is linked to high cholesterol. The body's ability to synthesize vitamin D from the sun diminishes as you age. Get your vitamin D levels checked with a blood test. If your level is low, take a daily vitamin D supplement.

6. Get your blood sugar level checked. You should be looking for a fasting blood sugar level of 100 or less. A too-high blood glucose level leads to elevated **LDL cholesterol** and high triglycerides, which is a dangerous blood fat that is a cholesterol remnant.

7. Eat less gluten. Our American high-gluten, wheat-based diet leads to obesity and also to inflammation, which research

shows may be an even a more dangerous heart disease driver than cholesterol. If you do eat wheat products, make sure they are whole grain, and stay away from multigrain products, which are no healthier than baked goods made with refined flour.

8. Exercise one hour daily. A brisk one-hour walk will help lower **cholesterol** and **high blood pressure**, and build up your heart's collateral blood flow.

9. Take a red rice yeast supplement. Red rice yeast is traditionally used in Chinese medicine. It contains a substance that is chemically identical to the active ingredient in a statin drug. Take it with your doctor's guidance.

10. Dust your food with cinnamon. In one study researchers found that about $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of cinnamon daily cut total cholesterol by 26 percent. Cinnamon is also an excellent way to make heart-healthy foods, like low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt, taste great, and if you sprinkle it on your oatmeal or other foods, you'll be boasting your breakfast's cholesterol-fighting power.

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