

Natural Treatments to Lower Cholesterol

Cholesterol can be lowered naturally with diet, exercise and supplements, regardless of what those drug commercials tell you. So how can we decrease cholesterol naturally and make sure that we have high levels of “good” cholesterol and low levels of “bad” cholesterol? First of all, we need to get a lot of exercise and not smoke. Losing weight and decreasing mental and emotional stress also help, as do avoiding excess alcohol and eliminating chronic infections. A healthy diet and supplements are key.

Diet can significantly lower cholesterol. I have seen patients lower their total cholesterol by up to 70-80 points just from a healthy diet. I have seen different types of diets be effective for different people. I believe this is largely due to insulin resistance or prediabetes. For some people a vegan diet that is low in oils or fats and high in vegetables can lower their cholesterol significantly. For others, diets that are high in protein and vegetables and low in carbohydrates drops their levels. A few basic principles are important. Increase intake of antioxidants, decrease intake of refined carbohydrates and sugars, decrease intake of unhealthy dietary fats, such as Trans fats and fried foods, and high amounts of saturated animal fats in red meats and dairy. Decrease polyunsaturated fats like corn, safflower and soybean oil, use extra virgin cold pressed olive oil. Oils found in fish help decrease cholesterol and triglycerides and are anti-inflammatory. Protein intake should be around 75-100g per day. Choose high quality organic, free range, grass fed or vegetable sources. Protein should be eaten at every meal so that it can help to balance the blood sugars by slowing the rise in blood sugar after a meal. Then there are carbohydrates. It is important for the diet to be high in fiber, at least 25grams per day, particularly soluble fibers found in apples, citrus oats and beans. Focus on very small amounts of very complex carbs which are low glycemic index, and only have a serving that is smaller than the size of your fist. And did I mention NO SUGAR!!!! No “white foods” such as , white pasta, white rice, white potatoes, white bread, cereals, and crackers. Eat many brightly colored fruits and vegetables, especially berries like blueberries and pomegranates, greens, orange squash, pumpkin, tomatoes, red cabbage all of which are high in antioxidants. Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol except for small amounts of red wine. Drink a lot of green tea.

There are many supplements that can help to decrease cholesterol and prevent its oxidation. Here are a few important ones:

- **Amla (*emblica officianalis*) or Indian Gooseberry**, is perhaps my favorite. Studies have shown that Amla, which is high in antioxidants helps to decrease cholesterol while increasing HDL (good cholesterol) and decreasing LDL (bad cholesterol) and triglycerides. Amla improves blood sugar levels, protects the liver and decreases blood pressure. The usual therapeutic dose is 1000mg 2-3 times per day. Amla can be taken in tablets or as a powder. The powder at our office is called Proberry Amla and it contains both Amla and other high antioxidant berry extracts. One scoop per day provides 2000mg of Amla. We also have a tablet called Amla Superfruit from Planetary Herbals.
- **Red yeast rice** is another popular supplement. 1200mg per day has been shown to decrease the production of cholesterol in the liver. This happens by blocking the same enzyme that the statin medications do. It can be quite effective, but can occasionally cause the same side effects of statins such as muscle pain. To help prevent side effects, Red Yeast rice should always be taken with 50-100mg of CoQ10. We carry a supplement called Cholesterol Complete at our office that contains Red Yeast Rice and other supplements that improve cholesterol.

- **Drinking plenty of green tea or taking a high EGCG supplement** (500mg twice per day) decreases LDL oxidation, decreases the deposit of LDL into artery walls, and decreases LDL while raising HDL.
- **Fish oil** increases the level of protective HDL, increases LDL particle size, decreases LDL number, and decreases inflammation. A good dose is 3-4 grams of EPA, DHA in a 3:2 ratio and 1.5-2 grams of GLA from Evening Primrose Oil or Borage Oil.
- **Niacin** lowers the small, dense LDL, reduces lipoprotein A, and apolipoprotein B (two especially harmful lipoproteins), and increases helpful HDL-2B. It must be started gradually as it causes flushing and may cause liver dysfunction, high uric acid (gout) and elevated blood sugar. Non flush does not work. Sometimes time release niacin minimizes this side effect. Increase the dose by 100mg per week, take it with food and at the same time of day. Baby aspirin taken with niacin or an apple or applesauce decreases flushing. Don't drink alcohol with it.
- **Tocotrienols**, which are closely related to Vitamin E including Gamma-delta tocotrienols, decrease apolipoprotein B and lower LDL and triglycerides, and increase HDL, and are strong antioxidants. 100mg per day is the usual dose.
- **Pantethine**, an active form of vitamin B5, lowers LDL and triglycerides, and increases HDL. The daily dose is 900mg.
- **Resveratrol** decreases oxidation of LDL, helps prevent the oxidation of HDL, reduces inflammation, and improves endothelial dysfunction. The recommended dose is 250mg per day.
- **Cleanse and detoxify the liver.** Liver cleanses help to decrease stored fat in the liver (fatty liver), they improve the liver's ability to make bile acids, they decrease inflammation in the liver, and they decrease toxins which cause inflammation and oxidation. A 10 day to 3 week cleanse every quarter can be very helpful for achieving healthy cholesterol levels. Herbs such as chelidonium, milk thistle, turmeric, alpha lipoic acid, dandelion, burdock root, and artichoke leaf can help this process. I have designed a 10 day body cleanse program, that is available at our clinic, that supports the body to gently and effectively cleanse liver, kidneys, bowel, lymph and skin.
- **Decreasing blood sugar and improving insulin resistance** helps to lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Herbs such as cinnamon, fenugreek, chromium, bittermelon, gymnema, magnesium, ginseng, and pterocarpus marsupium all help to lower blood sugar and decrease insulin resistance. We have several different products at our clinic designed to support blood sugar levels including Glycemic by Mt. Peaks and Alpha GTF by Priority One.

By Ellen Heinitz ND