

ALTHOUGH a diet high in saturated fat is the main cause of high blood cholesterol levels, high cholesterol in the diet can also raise blood cholesterol levels. Usually the effect is twice as bad, because foods high in cholesterol are usually high in saturated fat.

Which Foods Contain Cholesterol?

Only animal foods contain cholesterol - plant foods do not. In animals, as in humans, cholesterol is a part of all cells and serves many vital functions. Therefore, foods of animal origin - such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or milk - all contain some cholesterol.

Generally, foods high in animal fat are also high in cholesterol. Two exceptions to this generalisation are liver and eggs, which are not high in fat but are high in cholesterol.

Liver contains large amounts of cholesterol because the liver is the body organ that makes cholesterol.

Eggs contain large amounts of cholesterol because they contain the nutrients and other substances to support a growing embryo (eggs also contain a very high quality of protein and are rich in vitamins and minerals).

How Much Cholesterol Is Too Much?

Health experts recommend that you eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol daily.

An average man eats about 360 milligrams of cholesterol daily.

An average woman eats about 240 milligrams of cholesterol daily.

The table below shows the approximate cholesterol content of some common animal-based foods.

Food	Milligrams of cholesterol
3 ounces of liver	300
one large egg	215
3 ounces of lean red meat	90
3 ounces skinless poultry	90
3 ounces fish	50
one cup whole milk	33
one ounce cheese	30
1 teaspoon butter	11
one cup skim milk	4

Blood Cholesterol

Facts about Cholesterol

- Lowering your cholesterol level has a double payback: For every one percent you lower your blood cholesterol level, you reduce your risk for heart disease by two percent.
- Even if you already have heart disease, lowering your cholesterol levels will significantly reduce your risk for death and disability.
- As blood cholesterol exceeds 220 ml/dl (milligrams per decilitre, which are the units in which blood cholesterol is measured in the United States), risk for heart disease increases at a more rapid rate.
- All adults should have their blood cholesterol level measured at least once every five years.
- The liver makes most of the cholesterol in our bodies - only a small percentage comes from food. But the more saturated fat we eat, the more cholesterol our bodies make.
- Most people can bring down their blood cholesterol levels without medication by changing the way they eat and by becoming more active.
- Only animal foods contain cholesterol; plant foods do not contain cholesterol.
- A medium egg contains about 213 milligrams of cholesterol, a three-ounce portion of lean red meat or skinless chicken contains about 90 milligrams of cholesterol, and a three-ounce portion of fish contains about 50 milligrams of cholesterol.

What counts is your daily average over time, not your exact total each day. If you eat scrambled eggs for breakfast on Saturday but eat lean meats, poultry, and fish, along with liberal servings of fruits, vegetables, and grains the rest of the week, your daily average is likely to be below 300 milligrams.

Different Types of Cholesterol

There are different types of cholesterol - and not all cholesterol is harmful.

Low-density lipoprotein (or LDL) cholesterol is a bad type of cholesterol that is most likely to clog blood vessels, increasing your risk for heart disease.

High-density lipoprotein (or HDL) cholesterol is a good type of cholesterol. HDL cholesterol helps clear the LDL cholesterol out of the blood and reduces your risk for heart disease.

Source: YahooHealth