

Cholesterol: **The Facts**

Cholesterol 101

- 1.5 million Australians have high cholesterol.
- Cholesterol provides structure to cells, is involved in hormone production and even plays a role in digestion. Too much, however, is harmful to cardiovascular health and increases your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- There are two main types of cholesterol:

1. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) – the ‘bad’ cholesterol that can clog arteries.

2. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) – the ‘good’ cholesterol that removes LDL cholesterol from the bloodstream and takes it back to the liver.

Lower your cholesterol, naturally

Simple dietary and lifestyle interventions can improve your cholesterol profile. These include:

- 1. Reducing intake of saturated fat**, which is strongly linked to elevated LDL cholesterol levels. Deep fried foods, biscuits, cakes, butter and processed meats are high in saturated fat.
- 2. Eating more fibre.** Soluble fibre prevents the reabsorption of cholesterol- containing bile salts from the bowel, lowering cholesterol. Fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds and wholegrains are rich in fibre.
- 3. Oats are particularly good for you** because they contain a special type of fibre called beta-glucan which has strong cholesterol-lowering properties.
- 4. Consider plant sterols**, which actively block cholesterol absorption. They are found naturally in plant foods but can be added to products like milk and spreads. Two to three grams of plant sterols per day is recommended to improve cholesterol profile.

“Just 40g of rolled oats (1/3 cup) contains over a half of the amount of beta-glucan needed daily to help lower cholesterol.”

DID YOU KNOW?

- Saturated fat is the key dietary contributor to elevated LDL cholesterol, not cholesterol itself.
- One third of a cup of rolled oats provides almost 4 grams of heart-healthy fibre - that’s around 12% of your recommended daily intake.
- Eggs contain cholesterol, but they have virtually no effect on blood cholesterol levels.
- There are no obvious symptoms of high cholesterol, so getting your blood cholesterol tested regularly is key.

