

# Eat wisely

**S**ingaporeans could do a little better when it comes to making good food choices.

The National Nutrition Survey 2010 showed the mean cholesterol intake for adult Singapore residents was 341mg per day.

According to the Health Promotion Board, a person's intake of cholesterol should not exceed 300mg daily.

More than half, or 54.9 per cent, of respondents met or surpassed their recommended daily intake.

A plate of oyster omelette chalks up 350mg of cholesterol, while a teaspoon of butter contributes to 40mg.

Cholesterol in the body comes from two sources: 80 per cent of it is made in the liver and the rest comes from a person's diet. So people should watch their dietary cholesterol, which is contained in food such as eggs and shellfish.

In addition, two to three out of five to seven servings of carbohydrates eaten daily should come from wholegrain products.

These are good sources of soluble fibre which have the ability to bind cholesterol in the gut, reducing its absorption and increasing its excretion.

Also, not all fats are equal or equally bad. Eat saturated fats, found in dairy products and meat, sparingly as it increases low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels and the corresponding total cholesterol levels.

Avoid trans fats, made from the hydrogenation of vegetable oil, which lowers high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol levels and increases LDL cholesterol levels.

The best fats to consume are unsaturated fats as well as Omega-3 fatty acids.

What are the top five things one can do to have a cholesterol-lowering diet?

## KNOW YOUR MEATS

Choose leaner cuts of meat, such as loin or breast meat. Avoid sausages, Chinese sausages and luncheon meat.

Limit intake of red meat, such as beef, lamb, duck and goose, as they are higher in fat than white meat such as chicken and pork.

Remove skin and visible fat from poultry.

## CHOOSE HEALTHIER OILS

Choose healthier oils for cooking, such as canola, olive and sunflower oils. Avoid tropical oils such as palm oil and coconut milk. Replace coconut milk or coconut cream used in cooking with skimmed milk or low-fat milk.

When eating out, ask for no or less oil to be added to food.

## BE AWARE OF COOKING METHODS

Adopt healthier cooking methods such as steaming, boiling, grilling, roasting, baking and stewing, instead of deep frying. For example, it is healthier to eat grilled fish and baked potatoes instead of fish and chips.

Use a non-stick pan when cooking to reduce the use of cooking oil.

Scoop out the layer of solidified fat on top of chilled stews, casseroles and soups before heating up and serving.



TNP FILE PHOTO

**Making the right food choices can help to keep high levels of LDL or "bad" cholesterol at bay.**

When eating out, choose soupy dishes instead of fried dishes. For example, opt for beehoon soup instead of fried beehoon. Also, choose boiled wantons (dumplings) instead of fried ones.

## LIMIT CHOLESTEROL-RICH FOOD

Eat animal organs, such as pig liver or kidneys, no more than once a month and even then, in small portions.

Consume egg yolks no more than thrice a week. Have seafood, such as shellfish, prawns and crabs, not more than twice a week.

## BE A WISE SHOPPER

Choose products with the Healthier Choice Symbol as they are lower in total fats and saturated fats compared with other products in similar categories.

These products also have no trans fat or negligible amounts of it per serving.

Read the ingredient list to identify products that contain vegetable shortening and hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils, as they are high in saturated and trans fats. Choose these products less often.

Sources: Mr Gary Chiah Tung Lin, a dietitian in the department of dietetics at Singapore General Hospital; Ms Agnes Lim, a pharmacist at Changi General Hospital; Ms Lim Su Lin, chief dietitian at National University Hospital; Health Promotion Board



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### Fans on keeping cholesterol levels down

My cholesterol level is slightly on the high side. I try to eat moderately, keeping to fruit, vegetables and fish instead of meat. I also avoid processed and fried food.

I have a fitness app on my iPhone which lets me key in the food items I eat and shows me the calories, fat and cholesterol content. With regular exercise, my cholesterol level is now within the normal range.

**Tan Pauline Lh**

Diet control must go hand in hand with exercise. Eat steamed fish or sliced fish with beehoon or porridge, and boiled vegetables. If you need to fry with oil, use healthier types of oil. Avoid red meat, such as duck and beef, and animal innards, such as those found in kway chap. End the meal with fruit.

Exercise two to three times a week for at least 30 minutes each time. Exercise induces the body to produce good cholesterol. I have been sticking with this routine since last year and have avoided being put on medication.

**Wins Cjc**

Although I am not obese, I have had high cholesterol levels for many years. Besides taking medication, I try to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

When eating out, I avoid fried food, meat with high fat content and high-sugar drinks. I also incorporate fish, whole grains and fruit in my diet.

I jog for an hour every alternate day. On weekends, I swim or cycle. We are responsible for our own health.

**Jan Wong**

Some of my middle-aged friends are on statins. One of them suffered very unpleasant side effects on all the statins she tried, so she is watching her diet and supplementing it with a high dose of Omega-3.

Another friend refused to start on statins, fearing liver damage and succeeded in bringing her LDL down to a healthy level by going on a healthy diet.

My LDL was about 60 last year. It has always been under 100 (desirable range). I exercise almost every day, keep my weight under control, eat a mainly plant-based diet and take an Omega-3 supplement.

**May Li**

#### WINNER

**Wins Cjc** wins a \$50 shopping voucher for the best post. The winner should e-mail his full name, address, e-mail address, identity card number and contact details to [sthealth@sph.com.sg](mailto:sthealth@sph.com.sg) by next Wednesday. Specify ST MYB Facebook as the subject.

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