

The following heart-healthy food options are based on guidelines from the American Heart Association and the National Institutes of Health:

Choose whole-grain foods, like brown rice and whole-wheat breads and pasta, instead of refined foods, like white pasta, chips, and baked goods. Whole-grain foods help keep you full with fewer calories.

- **Choose** leaner cuts of meat, like sirloin tip, pork loin, or skinless chicken breast. Lose high-fat cuts of meat, like ribs, hamburgers, and bacon, which are high in saturated fats.
- **Choose** low-fat dairy products, like yogurt and cheese, which are low in solid fat and provide important nutrients. Avoid whole-fat dairy items like ice cream.
- **Choose** liquid oils, like olive oil, and lose solid fats, such as butter or shortening. Many vegetable oils are low in saturated fat.
- **Choose** colorful fruits and vegetables, which provide vitamins, fiber, and other important nutrients. Lose fruits and vegetables with added fat, sugar, salt, or sauces.

Regular exercise is another important component of lowering cholesterol. Thirty minutes of cardiovascular activity per day can help reduce your cholesterol. Remember to always speak to your doctor before starting an exercise program.^{ix}

The key for all Americans, according to Waenard L. Miller, MD, FACC, and cofounder of the Legacy Heart Center in Plano, Texas, is forming a heart health partnership with their physician. “The patient-doctor partnership is one of the most critical relationships you can have, and National Cholesterol Education Month can be a reminder to see your doctor, talk about your cholesterol numbers and target goal, and understand how to assess your cardiovascular risk,” says Dr. Miller.

Patients at increased risk for cardiovascular disease should consult with their doctor to set a treatment plan to lower their cholesterol to goal, or if a treatment plan has already been established, work with their doctor to determine if their cholesterol management plan is helping them reach their goals. For some patients, a healthy diet and exercise may not be enough to achieve their target cholesterol goal.ⁱⁱⁱ