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Want to lower your cholesterol levels? Exercise can help

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Can you lower your cholesterol readings through exercise?

Abnormal cholesterol levels such as [high LDL cholesterol or low HDL cholesterol](#) are a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Many people with high cholesterol levels have a family history, but diet and exercise are definitely factors in controlling the numbers.

"Some people can't lower their (cholesterol) level enough with only lifestyle changes," [says James Kleeman, Ph.D., of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, in a Web MD interview](#). "Those people do need to add drugs to their regimen."

Walking may be the best exercise. A brisk, 30-minute walk each day at lunchtime could do the trick. "Even walking at a brisk pace at least five days a week may be enough to significantly increase high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or good) cholesterol levels," says Web MD.

The site also recommends moderate workouts of the same length while biking, swimming, jogging, or using an exercise machine at low speed.

"Remember: you can get your exercise in 10 minutes increments if need be, as long as it adds up to 30 minutes by the end of the day," the site says.

Janet Brill, a registered dietitian and nutritionist, and author of *Cholesterol Down: 10 Simple Ways to Lower Your Cholesterol in Four Weeks Without Prescription Drugs*, says going on a strict diet doesn't work. "You would feel deprived, and you probably wouldn't do it."

So, what kinds of foods should you add? Some say [red wine](#), but several less controversial foods such as omega-3 fatty acids and monounsaturated fats -- in foods like oatmeal, apples, pears and beans, fish oils, avocados, almonds, soy and olive oil -- are good choices.

Even better: remove the harmful foods such as those high in trans fats like baked goods, breakfast cereals, crackers and cookies, whole fat milk products, eggs, red meat, chicken skins, vegetable and tropical oils.



AP Photo Outside Dow Chemical in Ambler, Pa., Chuck Jones runs regularly at lunchtime to help bring down his cholesterol level. Here, Jones stretches before his run.

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[Becky](#) said:

Wow the last paragraph was a real eye opener to me.... that consists of my families' daily foods (wow are we doing it wrong)! However I am going to take your advice... I am on a mission to change my families eating habits- I just learned some exciting ways to get my entire family excited about healthy eating and life-style, by reading [Dr. John E. Mayer's](#) latest book, "Family Fit." I have learned that it is possible to become healthy all while having fun.

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