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Wyoming Healthy Together Program
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Understanding Fat and Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol in your blood can lead to blocked arteries. This can cause problems such as heart attack and stroke. One of the best ways to manage heart and blood vessel disease is to lower your blood cholesterol. Planning meals that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol helps reduce the level of cholesterol in your blood. Below are eating tips to help lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Eat Less Fat

A healthy goal is to have less than 25% of your daily calories come from fat. Instead of fats, eat more fruits, grains, and vegetables. This also helps control your weight, and can even reduce your risk for some cancers. There are different kinds of fats in foods. Fats can be saturated, unsaturated, or trans fats. The best fats to choose are unsaturated fats. But fats are high in calories, so eat even unsaturated fats sparingly.

Limit Foods High in Saturated Fats

Saturated fats come from animals and certain plants (such as coconut and palm). Eating too much saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol levels and make your artery problems worse. Your goal is to eat less saturated fat. Below are some examples of foods that contain lots of saturated fat:

- Fatty cuts of meat (lamb, ham, beef)
- Many pastries, cakes, cookies, and candies
- Cream, ice cream, sour cream, cheese, and butter, and foods made with them
- Sauces made with butter or cream
- Salad dressings with saturated fats
- Foods that contain palm or coconut oil

Choose Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature. They are better choices for your heart than saturated fat. There are two types of unsaturated fats: polyunsaturated fat and monounsaturated fat. Aim to replace saturated fats with polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats.

- Polyunsaturated fats are found in corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, and other vegetable oils.
- Monounsaturated fats are found in olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil. Some margarines and spreads are now made with these oils, too. Of all fats, monounsaturated fats are the least harmful to your heart.

Avoid Trans Fats

Like saturated fats, trans fats have been linked to heart disease. Even a small amount can harm your health. Trans fats are found in liquid oils that have been changed to be solid at room temperature. Margarine, which is often made from vegetable oil, is one example. Vegetable shortening is another. Trans fats are often found in packaged goods. Check ingredients for the words “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated.” They mean the foods contain trans fat.

Eat Less Cholesterol

Eating foods that contain cholesterol can also raise your blood cholesterol. Try to eat less than 200 mg