

NUMBERS GAME

Of all the random digits you have tucked away in your mental database—your kid's cell number, your mother-in-law's zip code, pounds you plan to lose before that big event—the one number you probably don't know but really should keep close tabs on is your cholesterol. ♥ Despite the strong connection between cholesterol and heart disease (the number one killer of women and men) nearly 36 million American adults have never had their cholesterol checked. Experts recommend healthy young people have their levels measured every five years—more often if you are over 50 or at risk for heart disease or stroke. ♥ About half of all women in the U.S. are believed to have high cholesterol. But since an elevated reading (over 200 mg/dl) is seldom accompanied by any worrisome symptoms, it's often ignored and forgotten. This is unfortunate, as cholesterol plays a role in over half of all heart attacks and about 20% of strokes. The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to lower it.

Cut back on the saturated fat, eliminate the trans, and up the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Having trouble understanding your doctor's orders? Don't worry, we've done the translation for you. Eating right and getting your cholesterol into the healthy range has never been easier.

BY NORINE DWORKIN-MCDANIEL



NUMBERS GAME

How I did it!

Learn from these women, who made lifestyle changes and got their cholesterol down to healthy levels.



Deny Howeth

VITALS 44, PHOTOGRAPHER, QUEENS, NY

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL
BEFORE 207 AFTER 170

My mother has high cholesterol and my grandmother died of a stroke. So when told my cholesterol was high, I began to worry. **POSITIVE CHANGES** I started walking regularly and made some major alterations to my diet. For nine months I ate only whole grains, beans and vegetables. I lost 13 pounds and knocked nearly 40 points off my cholesterol.

Victoria Barbee

VITALS 41, IT PROFESSIONAL, CARMEL, IN

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL
BEFORE 230 AFTER 182

I was waiting for my mom to come through triple bypass surgery and my aunt said, "See what you have to look forward to?" That was enough for me to get serious about my health. **POSITIVE CHANGES** I started keeping a food journal and reading food labels. I'll only buy things low in saturated fat and high in fiber. I also adopted a dog, and every day I take him for two to three 30-minute walks. In one year I went from high to low risk for heart disease.



Tre' Tailor

VITALS 46, TV AND RADIO HOST, COLUMBIA, SC

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL
BEFORE 200 AFTER 155

Extreme fatigue and dizzy spells put me in the hospital for 10 days. I was diagnosed with a low heart rate, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Suddenly I was on four prescription drugs.

POSITIVE CHANGES I switched to low-fat cheeses and eliminated fried foods. I began exercising longer and harder. In six months my cholesterol dropped, and I cut out all my meds. I now just take a daily baby aspirin.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

A significant portion of your cholesterol level reflects the kind of fat you eat. Most of us should keep our total fat intake to 70 grams or less. Take a close look at which fats are best and which should be rationed.

THE GOOD

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats **DAILY DOSE** 32 g to 52 g. Have peanut butter (2 tablespoons) on toast for breakfast (14 g), salad tossed with 1 tablespoon olive oil for lunch (12 g) and a salmon burger for dinner (11 g).

Where to find polyunsaturated fats: salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines, herring, trout, shellfish, walnuts, flaxseed, sunflower seeds and some vegetable oils (soybean, corn, sunflower, safflower).

The majority of the fat you eat should be polyunsaturated, which can lower your cholesterol by 19% and LDL (bad cholesterol) by about 22%.

Where to find monounsaturated fats: avocados, peanut butter and some vegetable oils (olive, canola, peanut, sesame, sunflower).

Replacing saturated fats with monounsaturated fats can reduce total cholesterol by 12% and LDL by 15%.

THE BAD

Saturated fats **DAILY DOSE** Less than

16 g. That's going to add up fast: 1 cup of ice cream (15 g), one Quarter Pounder (14 g). Common culprits: red meats, full-fat dairy foods and some vegetable oils (palm, coconut).

The more saturated fat in your diet, the higher your cholesterol will be.

THE UGLY

Trans fats **DAILY DOSE** Less than 2 g. Two toaster pastries (2 g) or 1 cup of buttered microwave popcorn (3 g) already push you over the limit. It's best to avoid trans fats. Common culprits: many fried foods and packaged

items (chips, cookies, crackers, breads, baked goods, dessert toppings, margarine). Foods labeled "0 grams trans fat" can contain up to 0.5 g per serving—and most people eat more than one serving—if the words "partially hydrogenated oil" or "shortening" are on the ingredient list.

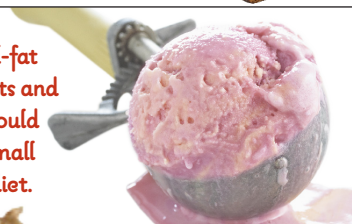
Trans fats are the worst offenders when it comes to cholesterol. They lower HDL (good) and boost total and LDL. For every 2% increase in calories from trans fats that you eat, your heart disease risk climbs 23%.

THE FATS

THE UGLY Keep packaged foods and baked goods to a minimum.



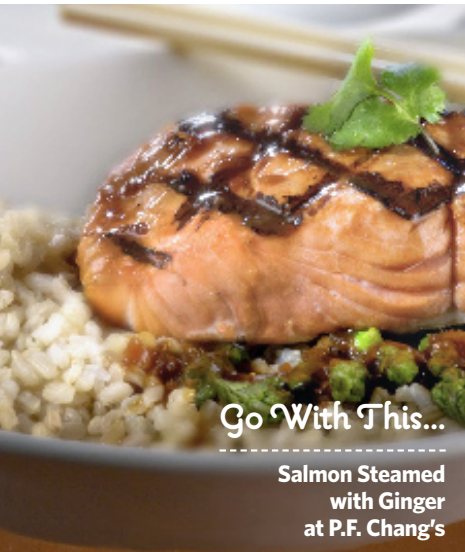
THE BAD Full-fat dairy products and red meats should play a very small role in your diet.



THE GOOD Swap out the bad fats above and swap in healthy fats, like those found in peanut butter, and you'll lower your overall cholesterol.

Hold the Fat, Please

Restaurant meals almost always contain more fat, calories and cholesterol than the food you make at home—some dishes contain more fat than you should eat in an entire day. To keep it lean when you dine out, check out our picks for healthier dishes at these popular chains.



Go With This...

Salmon Steamed with Ginger at P.F. Chang's



Or This...

Guiltless Black Bean Burger at Chili's

RESTAURANT	NO THANKS	YES PLEASE
ROMANO'S MACARONI GRILL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spaghetti & Meatballs with Meat Sauce: 2,430 calories, 128 g fat, 57 g saturated fat Primo Chicken Parmesan: 2,220 calories, 148 g fat, 52 g saturated fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capellini Tre Pomodoro: 540 calories, 20 g fat, 3 g saturated fat Pollo Magro Skinny Chicken: 330 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat
CHILI'S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire-Grilled Beef Quesadillas: 1,780 calories, 126 g fat, 42 g saturated fat Chicken Ranch Sandwich: 1,174 calories, 71 g fat, 11 g saturated fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guiltless Black Bean Burger: 609 calories, 11 g fat, 2 g saturated fat Guiltless Cedar Plank Tilapia: 199 calories, 4 g fat, 2 g saturated fat
P.F. CHANG'S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Chopped Salad: 940 calories, 68 g fat, 10 g saturated fat Lemongrass Prawns with Garlic Noodles: 608 calories, 44 g fat, 10 g saturated fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Steamed with Ginger: 125 calories, 14 g fat, 2 g saturated fat Lemon Pepper Shrimp: 227 calories, 10 g fat, 2 g saturated fat
RUBY TUESDAY'S <small>(saturated fat information unavailable)</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gourmet Chicken Pot Pie: 1,411 calories, 111 g fat Avocado Turkey Burger: 1,034 calories, 63 g fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Fresco: 464 calories, 23 g fat Top Sirloin: 256 calories, 6 g fat



YES, HIGH HDL IS GOOD

HDL is like a scrubby sponge, scouring bad LDL from arteries. When HDL is low, it's a potent marker for heart disease and stroke. These six steps can help nudge HDL into the healthy range (above 60).

- 1 QUIT SMOKING.** Smoking lowers HDL by an average of 4 mg/dl.
- 2 GET MOVING.** At least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise most days of the week can increase your HDL by 6% to 9%.
- 3 EAT A HEALTHY DIET.** Swap good fats for bad fats to lower your LDL and raise your HDL levels.
- 4 SLIM DOWN.** If you're overweight, every 7 pounds you lose raises your HDL by 1 mg/dl.
- 5 DRINK A GLASS OF RED WINE.** A Danish study found that HDL levels were up to 16% higher in red wine drinkers.
- 6 ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT MEDICATION.** Prescription niacin and fibrates along with fish oil supplements and statin medications may also improve your cholesterol.



Popular Drugs

Some 11 million Americans take statins to control their cholesterol. As the recommendation for healthy levels moves further downward, more people, even kids, are likely to be getting prescriptions.

While eating right and exercising can help reduce cholesterol by 10% to 30%, some people's bodies just continue to make a lot of it. In these cases a statin will help—lowering cholesterol 20% to 60% by limiting what the liver produces and cutting risk for a fatal heart attack or stroke by 30%, according to Jerome Granato, M.D., medical director of the coronary care unit at Allegheny General Hospital in Philadelphia. But a healthy diet and exercise is still vital—you can't eat six slices of pizza and simply pop a pill. ●