

# InFlight

## Wellness Weekly



### Healthy Weight & Nutritional Fitness



#### HEART HEALTH

## Cholesterol 101: What Is It? What Does It Do?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance. It's not inherently "bad." In fact, your body needs it to build cells, but too much cholesterol can pose a problem.

Your body makes all of the cholesterol it needs, so you do not need to obtain cholesterol through foods. Eating lots of foods high in saturated fat and trans fat may contribute to high cholesterol and related conditions.

Nearly 1 in 3 American adults has high cholesterol. Too much cholesterol puts you at risk for heart disease and stroke, two leading causes of death in the United States. High cholesterol has no signs or symptoms, so the only way to know if you have it is to get your cholesterol checked. Talk to your health care team about how you can manage your cholesterol levels and lower your risk.

### Why Cholesterol Matters

Cholesterol circulates in the blood. As the amount of cholesterol in your blood increases, so does the risk to your health. That's why it's important to have your cholesterol tested, so you can know your levels.

There are two types of cholesterol: LDL cholesterol, which is bad, and HDL, which is good. Too much of the bad kind, or not enough of the good kind, increases the risk that cholesterol will slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain.

High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke. If you have other risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure or diabetes, your risk increases even more.

### What You Can Do:

- Limit foods high in saturated fat. Saturated fats come from animal products (such as cheese, fatty meats, and dairy desserts) and tropical oils (such as palm oil). Foods that are higher in saturated fat may be high in cholesterol.
- Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium (salt), and added sugars. These foods include lean meats; seafood; fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt; whole grains; and fruits and vegetables.
- Eat foods naturally high in fiber, such as oatmeal and beans (black, pinto, kidney, lima, and others) and unsaturated fats, which can be found in avocado, vegetable oils like olive oil, and nuts).



As cholesterol (plaque) builds up in the arteries, the arteries begin to narrow, which lessens or blocks the flow of blood.

## How to Treat Yourself to Chocolate 5 Rules for Heart Healthy Indulgence

### 1. Cocoa Comes First

Look for chocolate bars with at least 60% cocoa content for the full health advantage. Dark chocolate is considered a top 10 source of antioxidants, according to the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, and is a filling treat shown to lower cravings for additional sweet, salty and fatty foods.

### 2. Focus on the Flavanols

Flavanols are the key to keeping your treat heart healthy. Unfortunately, commercial chocolate tends to be highly processed in a manner that eliminates most of the healthy flavanols and boosts the sugar, milk and butter content.

### 3. Avoid Extra Ingredients

A chocolate bar might have more milk and sugar than your doctor would recommend, but specialty fillings is where you run into real trouble. Caramel, nougat and creams are all fast ways to gain weight.

### 4. Remember Your Routine

Even without a caramel filling, cocoa doesn't come alone and the heart benefits are no replacement for a real cardio workout. The chocolate treat in your diet should be just one component of a heart healthy routine that includes plenty of leafy greens, adequate sleep and exercise.

### 5. Everything in Moderation

A piece or two of dark chocolate or a sprinkling of cocoa on your oatmeal are safe and sweet ways to add antioxidants to your diet, but it goes without saying that chocolate is meant in moderation.

Control Your Cholesterol. Retrieved from <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol>

Preventing High Cholesterol. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/prevention.htm>



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See calendar on other side to  
see what is going on this week

How to Treat Yourself to Chocolate. Retrieved from <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/nutrition/how-to-treat-yourself-to-chocolate>

## A Personal Message From Your Health Promotion Health Myth Busting Team



Dear Health Myth Busters,

*I keep hearing that chocolate is good for heart health. Is it too good to be true?*

Sincerely,  
Chocolate for the Heart

Dear Chocolate for the Heart,

It is not too good to be true, but it also is complicated. We have previously discussed studies indicating that foods derived from the cocoa bean, in particular, dark chocolate, which has a higher cocoa content than milk chocolate are heart-healthy. Specifically, people who eat more chocolate have lower rates of heart attacks, heart failure, and even death from heart disease.

A recent study, conducted by research teams at Harvard and in Denmark, indicates that chocolate also protects against another heart condition, atrial fibrillation (AF). AF affects between three million and six million people in the United States and raises a person's risk of heart failure, stroke, dementia, and death. The study involved over 55,000 men and women whose health was monitored for 13 years. Compared to those who ate chocolate less than once per month, those who had two to six servings of chocolate per week had a 20% lower rate of AF. However, the apparent protective effect of chocolate on AF seemed to wane in people who ate more than this.

The complicated part comes next. Most of the time that we eat chocolate, the good stuff comes with some bad stuff, mainly saturated fat and sugar. So the message from all of these studies is this: It's fine to eat chocolate regularly, but try to avoid the associated "bad stuff." For example, don't eat a lot of chocolate candies, and, when you make cocoa, don't add a lot of sugar and cream.

Sincerely,  
Health Myth Busters

Is chocolate heart-healthy? Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/is-chocolate-heart-healthy>

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you "Bust The Myths!" Send your questions to [usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil). Make sure to include in the subject line "Health Myth Buster." For more online health tips visit the Air Force Health Promotion webpage <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/> or [https://www.facebook.com/Joint-Base-Andrews\\_Health-Promotion\\_120094328077726](https://www.facebook.com/Joint-Base-Andrews_Health-Promotion_120094328077726)



HERE'S WHAT'S GOING ON WHERE YOU LIVE AND WORK



<https://www.resilience.af.mil/>

Your Local Health Promotion Office



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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Classes are held at Malcolm Grow Medical Clinic, 1060 West Perimeter Rd., Joint Base Andrews MD				
<b>Building Healthy Lifestyles</b> Mondays at 1500 Register at: 240-857-7186	<b>Building Healthy Lifestyles</b> Tuesdays at 1000 Register at: 240-857-7186			<b>Looking to Improve Your Health</b> Consider attending classes offered by our Clinical Health Psychology Team. Call 240-857-7186 to sign up
Comprehensive Fitness Incentive Program (C-FIP) 6 wk prgm - Mon/Wed/Fri 0700-0800, Tactical Fitness Ctr, Register at: <a href="https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f4ea4a62ca7f85-cfip">https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f4ea4a62ca7f85-cfip</a>				