



American Heart Association®

Healthy for Good™

YW4

YOUR WELL-BEING

# The Role of Food and Your Health: Cholesterol and Blood Sugar

*Time: 70 Minutes*

Join us to learn how nutritious foods can improve your health, specifically your cholesterol and blood sugar. Get guidance on setting personal goals and learn simple, actionable steps to add to your routine.

## OBJECTIVES:

Understand how food affects your body's cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Identify at least two strategies for controlling cholesterol and blood sugar.

Meet with a health care professional to check your cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

## SETUP

- Review resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies.
- Set up stations for participant cholesterol and blood sugar measurements.
- Contact health care professionals in advance to ask them to attend the event. They'll take the participants' cholesterol and blood sugar readings and discuss the results with them.
- Provide computer, internet access, and projector, if available.

## INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in an icebreaker to measure topic knowledge from the options provided in the Welcome Toolkit.

## DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Play video(s) or demonstrate content (see demo script).

## ACTIVITY (20 Minutes)

- Participants will meet one-on-one with health care professionals to:
  - Talk about their cholesterol and blood sugar numbers
  - Create a plan of action

## RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out handout(s) and review with participants.

## GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (20 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal-setting activity from the options provided in the Welcome Toolkit provided as part of the instructional materials.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



# The Role of Food and Your Health: Cholesterol and Blood Sugar Resource List

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## HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel  
or [heart.org/healthyforgood](https://heart.org/healthyforgood)

- ☐ Video – [The Role of Food and Your Health: Cholesterol demo](#)
- ☐ Video – [The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Sugar demo](#)
- ☐ Video – [Facts on Fats](#)
- ☐ Recipe – [Creamy Chicken Curry](#)

Find these resources in this lesson

- ☐ Handout – [Life's Essential 8: How to Control Cholesterol](#)
- ☐ Handout – [Life's Essential 8: How to Manage Blood Sugar](#)
- ☐ Handout – [Sip Smarter](#) (Optional)
- ☐ Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

## SPACE SETUP

- ☐ Chairs and tables
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Folders
- ☐ Computer, internet access and projector, if available

## ACTIVITY SUPPLIES\*

- ☐ Finger stick tests
- ☐ Blank index cards (for health care professional to write down participant's cholesterol and blood sugar numbers)

\*Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants. Coordinate supplies for cholesterol and blood sugar measurement with local health care professional.

# The Role of Food and Your Health: Cholesterol and Blood Sugar Demo Script

*Use if video capabilities are unavailable.*



## **SAY:**

It may surprise you to know that cholesterol itself isn't bad. In fact, cholesterol is just one of the many substances created and used by our bodies to keep us healthy!



So, what is cholesterol and where does it come from? Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. There are two types of cholesterol: HDL, or good cholesterol, and LDL, or bad cholesterol. HDL cholesterol carries bad cholesterol out of the arteries and helps protect you from heart attack and stroke. If you have too much LDL cholesterol, it can build up in the inner walls of your arteries. They can become narrow or clogged, reducing blood flow to your heart and brain.



To keep your cholesterol in check at all stages of your life, make healthy lifestyle choices. A healthy diet and regular physical activity are important. With cholesterol, remember to:

- Check and know your numbers
- Change your diet and lifestyle

Control your levels with your health care professional's help, if needed



**Here are some key tips to help keep your cholesterol levels in check.**



Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes and fish. Reduce your intake of saturated fat, processed meats, refined carbohydrates and sugar-sweetened beverages.



Understanding all types of fat will help you choose which to include or remove from your diet.

- Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are the "good fats." They can help lower bad cholesterol levels and your risk of heart disease and stroke. They provide essential fats that your body needs but can't produce itself.
- Saturated fats can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Replace saturated fats in your diet with good fats when possible.

- Hydrogenated oils and trans fats negatively affect cholesterol levels and increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes.



**The AHA recommends eating a healthy dietary pattern that:**

- Includes good, unsaturated fats
- Limits saturated fats
- Avoids trans fats



Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, or some of both. It's best to spread it throughout the week.



Add moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity (such as resistance or weights) at least 2 days per week.



Did you know you can lower the risk of diabetes and heart disease by controlling your blood sugar? Heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 killers among people with Type 2 diabetes.



Blood sugar is an important fuel for your body. Diabetes is a condition that makes your blood sugar level rise. The hormone insulin helps control blood sugar levels. If the level becomes too high or drops too low, your body can have trouble making the insulin it needs to stay healthy. When your body doesn't produce enough insulin or efficiently use its insulin, your blood sugar may become too high. Your body's cells won't be able to use the sugar in your blood and may become starved for energy. Over time, high blood sugar levels can hurt your eyes, kidneys, nerves or heart.



You can lower your blood sugar by making better drink and food choices. For example, replace sugary drinks, such as full-calorie sodas, with plain, sparkling or infused water. Sugar-sweetened beverages, such as sodas, energy drinks and sweetened tea, are the No. 1 source of added sugars in our diet. One can of a regular soda (12 ounces) has around 10 teaspoons of added sugar! Try to make healthy drink and food choices, control your portion sizes and read Nutrition Facts labels. Look for the amount of added sugar in foods.

## The Role of Food and Your Health: Cholesterol and Blood Sugar Activity Script

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**SAY:**

Today, you will meet with a health care professional to learn your cholesterol and blood sugar levels. To protect your privacy, they will write down your levels. You'll also learn the AHA's recommendations for cholesterol and blood sugar levels. However, we suggest you visit your health care professional for more guidance.

# HOW TO CONTROL CHOLESTEROL



## UNDERSTAND CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that comes from two sources: **FOOD** and your **BODY**.

It is only found in foods from animal sources. It travels in the body by lipoproteins (LDL and HDL)

High cholesterol can affect your heart and brain health. It can lead to heart disease and increase the risk of some types of dementia, like Alzheimer's disease.



### HDL = GOOD

High-density lipoprotein is known as "good" cholesterol.



### LDL = BAD

Low-density lipoprotein is known as "bad" cholesterol.

HDL helps keep LDL from sticking to artery walls. This reduces plaque buildup and lowers the risk of heart disease and stroke.

[heart.org/cholesterol](http://heart.org/cholesterol)



## TRACK LEVELS



A health care professional can check your cholesterol with a simple blood test and explain what it means for your health.



Keep track of your cholesterol numbers. If you have high cholesterol, take steps to reduce it.

Learn more at [heart.org/lifes8](http://heart.org/lifes8)

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## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



### EAT SMART

Eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and lean proteins like fish and seafood. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks, and foods that are highly processed.



### MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower cholesterol numbers. It can also improve your mood and clear your mind.



### KNOW YOUR FATS

The fats you eat can affect your cholesterol numbers. Replace saturated fats like butter and whole dairy products with healthy fats. Healthy fats include olive oil, fatty fish, nuts and eggs.



### NO NICOTINE

Smoking lowers good HDL cholesterol. It also increases your risk of heart disease and affects your brain health.



### TAKE MEDICATION AS DIRECTED

Taking your medicine is important. Medicines like statins, or others, can help you control your cholesterol numbers.

# HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR

## ✓ UNDERSTAND BLOOD GLUCOSE (Blood Sugar)

Health screenings with your doctor often include measuring how much glucose is in your blood. Healthy blood glucose is one sign that your brain, kidneys, and heart are healthy. If blood glucose is too low, you may feel tired or dizzy but feel better after you eat. High blood glucose may be related to things like dehydration or infection. But if blood glucose is too high over time, it may mean you have pre-diabetes or diabetes.

**GLUCOSE** When we eat food, our body makes glucose, a type of sugar. It travels in the blood to places in the body where energy is needed. Other parts of the body need insulin to carry glucose into cells to be used as energy. Healthy people can maintain healthy blood glucose by eating smart, being physically active, managing stress, and getting healthy sleep.

*In Type 2 diabetes, glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells because:*

↓ The body develops “insulin resistance” and can’t use its insulin efficiently.

↓ The pancreas slowly loses its ability to produce insulin.

The result can be a high blood sugar level.



## ✓ TRACK LEVELS

Health care professionals can take blood sugar readings. If you are living with Type 2 diabetes, you may need to monitor your blood sugar level more often.

If you have diabetes visit [American Heart Association | Diabetes](#).

Fasting Blood Glucose	Diagnosis	What It Means
Lower than 100 mg/dl	Normal	Healthy range
100 to 125 mg/dl	Prediabetes (impaired fasting glucose)	At increased risk of developing diabetes.
126 mg/dl or higher	Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2 diabetes)	At increased risk of heart disease or stroke.

Learn more at [heart.org/lifes8](https://heart.org/lifes8)

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## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



### EAT SMART

Eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and lean proteins like fish and seafood. Drink plenty of water. Water can help maintain healthy blood sugar levels. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks, and foods that are highly processed.



### MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It can also help you manage diabetes if you are living with it. Exercise also improves your energy, mood, and clears your mind.



### MANAGE WEIGHT

Stay at a healthy weight to help prevent, delay or manage diabetes. Speak to a health care professional to understand what is a healthy weight for you.



### NO NICOTINE

Avoid smoking, vaping, nicotine pouches or using tobacco. It makes it harder to manage prediabetes and diabetes. Even being around secondhand smoke can cause problems.



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# + SIP + SMARTER

To cut back on added sugars and empty calories, replace these sweetened drinks:

## REPLACE SUGARY BEVERAGES

- full-calorie sodas
- energy drinks
- sweetened tea & coffee drinks
- sweet “enhanced water”
- powdered drink mixes
- sports drinks
- smoothies, juices, yogurt drinks and agua frescas with added sugar

## WITH BETTER CHOICES

- flat or sparkling water, plain or naturally flavored with fruit and herbs
- coffee and tea without added sugar
- 100% fruit juice
- a no-calorie or low-calorie soda or other beverage

## DID YOU KNOW?



On average most Americans consume nearly

**17 TEASPOONS** of added sugars each day.

This is nearly **TRIPLE** the recommended daily limit for women and **DOUBLE** for men!



Sugar-sweetened beverages like soda and energy/sports drinks are the

**#1 SOURCE OF ADDED SUGARS IN OUR DIET.**



A can (12 FL OZ) of regular soda has about **150 CALORIES** and **10 TEASPOONS** of added sugar.

## CUT BACK ON ADDED SUGARS



### CUT BACK ON ADDED SUGARS.

Gradually replace sugary drinks with sugar-free and unsweetened options.

Gradually reduce the amount of sweetener in your coffee or tea.

Gradually reduce the powdered drink mix you add to water to allow your taste to adjust to less sweetness.

Add plain or sparkling water to sweetened beverages to consume less added sugar per serving.



### CHOOSE WATER AS YOUR GO-TO BEVERAGE CHOICE.

Carry a refillable water bottle.

Add a splash of 100% fruit juice or slices of citrus, berries, or cucumbers for a boost of flavor.

Try seltzer or sparkling water or club soda or sparkling water.



### MAKE YOUR OWN BEVERAGES.

Start with an unsweetened beverage such as green tea. Flavor it with fruit, 100% fruit juice, flavored or plain seltzer, and herbs such as fresh mint or basil.

Get healthy, delicious recipes for beverages and more at [heart.org/recipes](http://heart.org/recipes).

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>

## READ THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL AND INGREDIENTS LIST TO MAKE SMART CHOICES.

Some drinks that may seem healthy may be high in calories and added sugar. When looking at the Nutrition Facts label, focus on the amount of added sugar per serving and the serving size.

### **SPECIFIC**

- What do you want to accomplish?

### **MEASURABLE**

- How will you track your progress toward your goal?

### **ACHIEVABLE**

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

### **REALISTIC**

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?  
If not, how can you get them?

### **TIME-BOUND**

- When will your goal be achieved?

### **EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:**

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:

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