

## Statin Alternatives

Here's a truth that might surprise you: We all need cholesterol. It aids in the production of hormones and vitamin D and plays a crucial role in the production of bile acids needed to break down fats and digest food. The problem is, too many of us get too much of a good thing. To stay healthy, most doctors recommend keeping cholesterol numbers at or below 200 mg/DL. -

### Lifestyle Changes for a Healthy Heart

Much has been written about the correct diet we should be eating to regulate our cholesterol levels – oats, beans, lentils, nuts (walnuts and almonds), oily fish, garlic, dark chocolate etc.

Begin with food that lowers cholesterol and quells inflammation—another statin claim to fame. This includes lots of fiber-rich vegetables, beans, and legumes; a little fruit; and plenty of lean protein with an emphasis on salmon, tuna, and other omega-3–rich fish. (For extra fiber, add a quarter-cup of freshly ground flaxseed to water, smoothies, salads, or other foods.)

**Items to avoid** include processed oils, which promote inflammation, and starches and sugars, which contribute to insulin resistance—a significant risk factor for both heart disease and diabetes.

**CoQ10 and vitamin D.** CoQ10 energizes the heart muscle, lowers blood pressure, and protects against heart failure. Vitamin D deficiencies are linked with a dramatically increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

**Extra virgin olive oil** is one of the better suggestions and should be incorporated wherever possible.

**Tumeric** – a well-known anti-inflammatory which can also reduce cholesterol levels.

**Dandelion root** – used for liver and gall bladder troubles. Also, an effective diuretic, dandelion appears to regulate blood sugar and lower total cholesterol levels.

**Cayenne** – this is one of the most important plants used in herbal medicine. It basically acts as a catalyst, accelerating the action of other herbs.

### Psyllium

Packed with soluble fiber and commonly used to treat constipation, psyllium reduces cholesterol absorption in the intestines. Studies show that taking 5 to 10 grams of soluble fiber a day can lower LDL by 5 percent.

**How to use:** Take five grams of psyllium seed husk (about a teaspoon) twice a day in a full glass of water. Supplemental fiber may affect the absorption of other oral medications, so ingest them at least two hours apart.

### Artichoke extract

Artichoke extract works by increasing bile production in the liver, which in turn increases cholesterol excretion—meaning that any excess is eliminated rather than absorbed. "Artichoke extract is an exciting complementary therapy for the prevention and treatment of arteriosclerosis and coronary heart disease.