

Patient Handout

Tips for Plant-Based Eating

Want to boost your intake of plant-based foods so your cholesterol improves? Here are some ideas.

- 1. Take baby steps.** Make one small change at a time. Completely overhauling your diet overnight is stressful and sets you up for disappointment. Choose a reasonable goal for a week or two, then add a new change. After a few months, you'll have made big progress with these baby steps.
- 2. Practice Meatless Mondays.** This is a popular movement focusing on just one vegetarian day each week. It's a great opportunity to try new plant-based recipes.
- 3. Swap your fats.** Choose polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats for cooking oils. Best bets, according to research, are olive, canola, safflower, and sunflower. Use these to make your own simple salad dressings and improve your fat quality.
- 4. Boost beans.** Including 1/2 cup of beans just twice a week improves cholesterol. Enjoy pinto, black, navy, or cannellini beans; black-eyed peas; or garbanzos/chickpeas.
- 5. Add lentils.** Make a big batch of lentils and keep it in the fridge to eat all week. Lentils are delicious atop salads or tucked into wraps. Swap one-half of the meat in your homemade tacos with cooked lentils for a high-fiber meal.
- 6. Snack smart.** Nibble on plant-based snacks rich in fiber. Some ideas: hummus with your favorite crunchy veggies, nuts with fresh fruit, trail mix including nuts and dried fruits, or edamame.
- 7. Try ancient grains.** Experiment with fiber-packed whole grains such as barley, farro, freekeh, quinoa, and millet. Use them as a substitute for white rice or pasta in your favorite dishes.
- 8. Eat your veggies.** Tuck your favorite crunchy fresh vegetables into pita breads, sandwiches, and wraps. Try new salad vegetables for a flavor boost. Include vegetables at breakfast with a side salad (yes, it's tasty in the morning, too!) or mixed into your omelet.
- 9. Include oats.** Eating oatmeal about three times per week positively affects your cholesterol. And, it's not just for breakfast—oatmeal is a delicious and filling afternoon snack. Top it with fresh fruit or nuts for greater influence on your lipid levels.
- 10. Explore new recipes.** Find a new favorite plant-based cookbook, blog, or website to inspire you. Look for recipes that use healthful oils, whole grains, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and fruits. Be creative!