

Best diet to control harmful cholesterol, LDL - Tehran Times

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We know using diet to control cholesterol plays a big role in managing levels successfully... now here's news on just what you need to be eating.

Cholesterol lowering choices such as soy, nuts and plant-based options might be better at bringing down cholesterol than the traditional low fat eating plan.

This comes from a brand new study that found that those suffering from high cholesterol and followed what's been termed the portfolio diet (a selection of foods that lower cholesterol) brought down their bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein or LDL) by almost 13% after 6 months of sticking to the diet.

This compares to a 3% drop in LDL for those who stuck to a diet that was low in saturated fats. We know that as those cholesterol numbers go up, so does the risk of dangerous disease, especially heart disease. Experts used to think that most of us couldn't alter our cholesterol numbers with diet alone, but that belief is changing quickly.

When it comes to the portfolio diet, experts suggest you think of the eating plan not as a "diet" but rather more like an investment in cholesterol lowering foods.

Just like you wouldn't put all your savings in one stock, don't bet your health on a single healthy food - choose lots of good for your options.

The researchers took a look at the portfolio diet and compared it to the traditional low fat eating plan in 351 subjects who had high cholesterol.

The participants were split into three groups, the first got two sessions of counseling on the portfolio diet, a second group had a more intensive 7 sessions of counseling, and the third followed the more common low fat diet.

Both the regular and intensive counseled portfolio diet groups saw a drop in their LDL cholesterol of almost 13%, as compared to a mere 3% reduction for those subjects following a low fat diet.

Since heart disease is such a well-known killer, experts believe that many people can benefit by adopting this eating plan. If you're being urged to start on a statin drug by your doctor, it may be even more important for you to give this eating plan a try first - giving you a chance to avoid a prescription medication (and its side effects) and work with nature to help the body stay well. Have the discussion with your doctor to see what best suits your needs.

Research has shown that adding plant-based foods to the diet can give you very nearly the same drop in bad cholesterol, as you'd achieve with a prescription medicine.

What's also interesting is the three monthly counseling session was almost as effective as going every month for counseling. The fact that the results came after so few sessions is surprising... and encouraging. So just what is the portfolio diet?

It's an eating plan made up of four kinds of foods that have been recognized by the Food and Drug Administration as having an ability to bring down cholesterol levels. The four are...

1. Soy protein - substitute meat for soy based protein... try soy burgers or cold 'meats'. Soy milk and soy beans (edamame) are other good choices.
2. Sticky fiber - oats, barley or psyllium husks, three servings per day, or choose veggies like eggplant (aubergine) and okra.
3. Plant sterol esters - instead of butter or margarine, use plant-based margarine. Brands in the U.S. are Benecol and Take Control. You can also get these nutrients in capsules as a dietary supplement.
4. Nuts - tree nuts like almonds or walnuts, even peanuts, are also part of the plan. Just a small handful a day will do.

Moving forward, researchers will need to see if the cholesterol drops are maintained after the six-month mark. It will also be important to see if people can stick with the plan... keep their motivation up... over the long term.

The positive thing about using the portfolio diet as a way of controlling cholesterol is that it focuses on bringing things into the diet, not removing things. This may just be why dietitians see this way of eating as more easily accepted.

(Source: EzineArticles)