

Plant Stanols and Sterols



Eating plant stanols and sterols can help lower total and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease. Read on to learn more!

What Are Plant Stanols and Sterols?

Plant stanols and sterols are natural substances. They are found in small amounts in plant-based foods, such as:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Beans and peas
- Nuts and seeds
- Vegetable oils
- Many grains

How Do Stanols and Sterols Help Lower Cholesterol?

Your body absorbs cholesterol into the bloodstream from the foods you eat. Plant stanols and sterols are similar in size and shape to cholesterol. When you eat plant stanols and sterols, they compete with cholesterol from other foods for absorption in the digestive system.

As a result of this competition, some cholesterol in your digestive system is blocked. This helps lower total and LDL cholesterol. The cholesterol that is not absorbed passes through your body as waste.

How Much Should I Eat?

To help lower your cholesterol levels, eat plant stanols and sterols regularly. Aim to eat at least 2 grams of plant stanols or sterols every day.

On average, eating this amount lowers LDL cholesterol by 10 percent. For example, if your LDL cholesterol is 150 mg/dL and you add foods with 2 grams of plant stanols or sterols to your daily meal plan, you could lower your LDL cholesterol to 135 mg/dL.

Where Are Plant Stanols and Sterols Found?

Many manufacturers add plant stanols and sterols to foods such as:

- Margarine spreads
- Orange juice
- Granola bars
- Cereal
- Salad dressings
- Yogurt

Check the food label for the amount of plant stanols or sterols per serving.

What Else Can I Do to Lower Cholesterol?

Plant stanols and sterols may help reduce cholesterol. However, they are not a replacement for a healthy lifestyle. To lower your cholesterol, you need to be physically active, eat healthy, and perhaps take medication.

Talk to a registered dietitian (RD) if you have further questions about plant stanols and sterols or other issues related to nutrition.

