



Make sure that you are around for a long time...they need you!

Heart disease is the #1 killer in the U.S., responsible for one death every 35 seconds. No matter how old you are, it's never too early or too late to protect your heart. And there's no better time to do it than now. In her book, Cholesterol Down (Three Rivers Press, 2006), Janet Bond Brill, Ph.D., R.D., highlights cholesterol-lowering foods that will satisfy your stomach and keep your ticker healthy. Plus: Test your heart attack risk...

Cholesterol and Heart Disease

"The scientific evidence is indisputable that lowering your cholesterol reduces your risk of contracting heart disease and of dying from a heart attack," explains Brill.

Cholesterol is found in our bodies in particles called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) are deemed "bad" cholesterol because high levels of them can lead to a buildup of plaque in your arteries. This thick mass narrows your arteries, restricting the flow of blood – much like trying to sip juice through a clogged straw. Eventually the plaque ruptures and a blood clot forms, cutting off the flow of blood, oxygen and nutrients to the brain. Hello, heart attack and stroke!

High-density lipoproteins (HDL), on the other hand, are dubbed "good" cholesterol for their ability to pick up the LDL dogging your arteries and take it to the liver, where it's processed and eventually excreted. Brill's cholesterol-lowering eating plan is as tasty as it is effective. "My diet is about what you can eat, not what you can't," she says. What's on her list? For starters, try these eight superfoods:

(Aim to eat all eight daily, and heed the two bonus tips as well. If you follow only half the steps, you'll only get half the benefits.)

1. Oatmeal

Oats are rich in beta-glucan, a special type of soluble fiber that acts like a sponge to soak up cholesterol.

Dig in: Add cinnamon or dried cranberries to your morning oatmeal for a flavor boost. Oat-bran is a highly concentrated source of beta-glucan, and it's easy to mix into homemade bread, muffin and pancake batter. (Brill's book includes a yummy recipe for blueberry muffins with oat-bran).

Dr. Brill's daily Rx: 3 grams of beta-glucan, found in a 1/2 cup of dry oatmeal or oat bran.



2. Almonds

Almonds contain two powerful antioxidants – vitamin E and flavonoids – both of which prevent the oxidation of LDL, a precursor to plaque buildup.

Dig in: Opt for almonds still in their skins, which pack a hefty dose of flavonoids. Stir a handful into your

Dig in: Chop, slice or dice 'em, but leave the peel on for maximum [health benefits](#).

Dr. Brill's daily Rx: One apple a day (to keep the doctor away, of course).

7. Beans

Beans contain a special type of soluble fiber that gets fermented in the colon. Healthy bacteria eat the fiber and bean sugars to form short-chain fatty acids, which travel to the liver and hinder LDL cholesterol production.



Dig in: Brill loves Adzuki beans, which are used in Japan to make sweet red bean paste. She also recommends cannelloni beans (try them in Tuscan soups, a type of Italian bean-based soup) and kidney beans, perfect in southwestern chili.

Dr. Brill's daily Rx: cup of legumes (beans, peas or lentils).

8. Soy Protein



Soy protein contains phytoestrogens – compounds that increase the number and effectiveness of LDL cholesterol receptors, improving the liver's ability to get rid of cholesterol in your bloodstream.

Dig in: Order a soy latte at your favorite coffeehouse, throw tofu into a fruit smoothie, use soy flour when baking, or mix a handful of roasted soynuts with dried fruit for an energy-boosting trail mix.

Dr. Brill's daily Rx: 20–25 grams.

Diet isn't your only defense against cholesterol. "Every step works to lower cholesterol in a specific way," Brill explains. "By combining them all together, you get an extremely powerful LDL-lowering multi-pronged approach."

Here are two of her favorite non-food-related tips:

9. Take Metamucil (Psyllium Husk)

Metamucil contains psyllium husk, a fiber that blocks cholesterol from entering your intestinal cells. It's "the most powerful LDL-lowering viscous soluble fiber in existence," according to Brill. This fiber soaks up cholesterol so you excrete it rather than absorb cholesterol into your intestinal cells.

Dig in: The National Cholesterol Education Program recommends adults consume 10-25 grams of soluble fiber a day, but most of us get only 3-4 grams.

