

## Ask the Expert: What is Cholesterol?

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '26

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 2 in 5 adults have high cholesterol in the United States, but what is cholesterol and what does “high cholesterol” mean?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is present in the foods we eat and in our body’s cells. Cholesterol is vital for our body to function properly. It is used to make hormones and vitamin D. There are three types: HDL (or high density lipoprotein) that help us regulate cholesterol levels, LDL (or low density lipoprotein) that can build up in our blood vessels when there is too much, and VLDL (or very low density lipoprotein) that can also promote build up in our blood vessels.

Why is high cholesterol potentially harmful? If there is too much LDL and VLDL cholesterol in the body, it can build up along the walls of the blood vessels. Since it is waxy, it sticks to the insides of the small and narrow blood vessels, making it easy for them to become clogged. The blocked blood vessels make it difficult for blood to flow through.

This is dangerous because decreased blood flow can lead to the formation of blood clots or heart disease.



Consuming high amounts of saturated and trans-fat can raise LDL cholesterol and lead to high cholesterol. High cholesterol can also be related to genes and

family history. It is important to check with your primary care physician and talk to a dietitian to learn how you can control your cholesterol. Keep an eye on your family and/or medical history, age, and diet. Try to eat heart-healthy foods like nuts, seeds, and whole grains which can prevent LDL and total cholesterol levels from getting too high.

### IN THIS ISSUE

<b>Ask the Expert:</b> What is Cholesterol?	1
<b>Food Safety:</b> Safe Grilling	2
<b>Eating Right:</b> Building a Balanced Meal	3
<b>In the News:</b> New Newsletter Editor	4

## Food Safety: Safe Grilling

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As summer comes into full swing, outdoor grilling and picnicking is a fun activity. But, the outdoor heat can present risks to food safety. Beef up your food safety skills with the following tips:

- Make sure your grill is clean before cooking food. Using hot, soapy water is enough to clean any grease buildup and remove any charred leftovers.
- Change your utensils to avoid contamination from one food to another. Label any knives and other utensils strictly for grilling foods, raw meat, and ready-to-eat foods to help avoid food-borne illness. This applies to cutting boards and plates as well.
- Keep the length of time in mind when foods are outside. Perishable foods should not be left out in room temperature for more than two hours. If temperatures rise above 90°F, foods should only be out for an hour or less. Condiments should also be properly chilled.
- Leftovers that have been out in the heat should not be kept for more than four days, even when properly chilled.

Don't let harmful bacteria, cross-contamination, and food-borne illness ruin your summer days. Happy grilling!



Source: <https://www.eatright.org/food/home-food-safety/wash-and-separate-foods/the-rules-of-separation-at-the-grill-is-not-recommended>, <https://www.eatright.org/food/food-preparation/seasonal->

## Avocado Melon Breakfast Smoothie

### Directions

1. Cut an avocado in half. Carefully remove the pit by striking it with a knife and twisting it until it pops out.
2. Scoop out the avocado and place it in a blender.
3. Add in the lime juice, milk, yogurt, apple juice, and honey.
4. Add the honeydew last to make sure all chunks are blended.
5. Blend well and serve! It can be kept in the fridge up to 24 hours.

### Ingredients (2 servings)

- 1 large ripe avocado
- 1 cup honeydew melon chunks
- Lime, juiced (1 1/2 tsp)
- 1 cup any milk (whole, fat-free)\*
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup apple juice or white grape juice\*
- 1 tablespoon honey



### Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 320  
Protein: 13g  
Carbs: 46g  
Fat: 11g

**\*foods included in the  
TEFAP (The Emergency Food  
Assistance Program)**

Sources: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/avocado-melon-breakfast-smoothie>

# Eating Right:

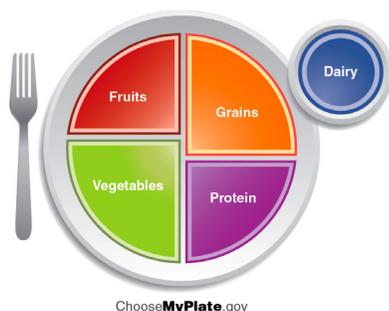
## Building a Balanced Meal

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With longer and brighter days, food can be a way to enjoy the weather to the fullest. Imagine a nice summer night with some delectable grilled meat and ice cream. You can still enjoy these delicious foods with a balanced plate. Learning how to build a balanced meal can help you develop better habits to meet all your nutrient and vitamin needs.

Some ways to do this are by:

- Adding a fat source to your meal. Having fats like avocado, olive oil, nuts and seeds help you feel full for longer because of their high energy and calorie content. Many proteins also contain fats.
- Keeping your plate interesting, add some color! Include at least one vegetable and fruit on your plate. Not only are fruits and vegetables packed with vitamins and minerals, but they are a great source of fiber which helps regulate your hunger.
- Adding a source of protein. Protein will help keep your body strong and build healthy bones and muscles. Try to avoid proteins with high saturated fat and also try to include seafood and plant proteins like beans and legumes
- Adding carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are very important because they are our main source of energy. Try including complex carbohydrates, or things like wholegrain cereals, bread and pasta which are great because they also include fiber and promote digestive health.
- Staying hydrated. Although this is not necessarily part of your meal per say, keeping hydrated is essential for body function. This can be through sources like low-fat dairy, plain water, and even foods that offer a high amount of water content such as watermelon or cucumber. Limit juices and drinks with a high sugar content which can be even more dehydrating.



Source:<https://habs.uq.edu.au/blog/2021/10/how-build-healthy-balanced-meal>



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This newsletter is edited by Emma Araya and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

PAGE 4

IN THE NEWS

## In The News: New Newsletter Editor

Per the last newsletter, we say goodbye to our editor Adina Miller. Adina has been such an insightful editor with great articles. It's hard to let her go and we wish her all the best. We welcome our new editor, Emma Araya.

Hello! My name is Emma Araya. I feel very blessed and honored to be in this position. I hope to bring you great and interesting articles. I want to feature topics in the newsletter that include our varied population in Indiana and that explain concepts about nutrition that we may not be aware of or learn about in our everyday lives.

I'm from San Diego, California. I'm a rising sophomore at Purdue University studying Dietetics and Nutrition, Fitness & Health. A fun fact about me is that I've been to over 20 countries! Traveling is one of my biggest hobbies and I love learning about the world around me. Some of my favorite trips include Jordan, Tanzania, and my home country of Costa Rica.

I'm looking forward to this new chapter for the newsletter!

