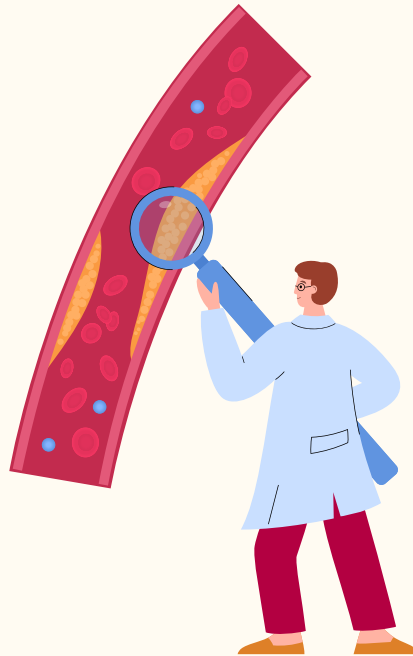

The Lifestyle and Culinary Medicine Newsletter

Welcome to August!



As we enjoy the final stretch of summer, we're dedicating this month's newsletter to a foundational piece of heart health: **cholesterol**

While cholesterol is something we hear about often, understanding what those numbers actually mean—and how our daily choices shape them—can be truly transformative. This month, we're demystifying cholesterol and sharing simple, meaningful ways to nourish your heart from the inside out.

With care,

Dr. Lateef

Culinary Medicine and Cholesterol:

From a culinary medicine perspective, cholesterol isn't just a number on a lab panel—it's a dynamic outcome of how we build our plates and prepare our food. Culinary medicine bridges clinical lipid management with practical kitchen skills, shifting the focus from strict restriction to delicious, proactive nourishment.

- **Focus on Fiber over Exclusion:** Soluble fiber found in oats, barley, beans, lentils, and flaxseeds acts as a natural sponge in the digestive tract, binding to cholesterol-rich bile acids and helping the body eliminate them naturally. Multiple studies have shown that a higher intake of fiber, more than 30 grams per day has been linked to lower total and LDL cholesterol.
- **Smart Fat Substitution:** Swapping foods high in saturated fats (like heavy butter coatings or fatty cuts of meat) for monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (extra virgin olive oil, avocado, walnuts, and seeds) actively improves LDL/HDL ratios without sacrificing flavor or rich mouthfeel.



- **The Power of Phytosterols:** Plant-derived compounds found in whole grains, nuts, and unrefined oils naturally compete with cholesterol for absorption in the gut, making whole-food preparation a powerful preventative tool.
- **Flavor-First Cooking Techniques:** Utilizing vibrant culinary tools such as acid (citrus, vinegars), herbs, spices, and roasting vegetables builds deep, satisfying flavor profiles that remove the need to rely on excess butter or heavy cream.

Italian Wedding Soup

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1½ cups chopped yellow onion
- 3 cup chopped carrot
- 3 cup chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 6 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 6 ounces orzo, preferably whole-wheat
- 1½ tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 24 cooked chicken meatballs, full size
- 4 cups baby spinach
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese



Instructions:

1. Heat 2 tablespoon oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrot, celery and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Add broth, cover and bring to a boil. Add orzo, oregano and salt; cover and cook, stirring occasion-ally, until the orzo is just tender, about 9 minutes.
3. Stir in meatballs and spinach; cook until the meatballs are heated through and the spinach is wilted, 2 to 4 minutes.
4. Serve sprinkled with cheese and drizzled with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil.



Mediterranean Diet:

This eating pattern is based on the dietary habits of the countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea. The "Mediterranean diet" can sound intimidatingly foreign, leading many to assume it won't fit their culture or routine. But at its core, it's not about adopting someone else's menu—it's just about building blocks. By taking staples like fresh produce, whole grains, legumes, seafood, and olive oil, you can easily weave them into your own traditional recipes and daily meals.

Evidence indicates a strong correlation between adherence to a Mediterranean diet and improved cholesterol markers—specifically, elevated HDL ("good") cholesterol paired with decreased LDL ("bad") and total cholesterol.

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How to lower your cholesterol with the mediterranean diet:

Mix up your produce: It's easy to buy the exact same fruits and vegetables every week. To break the routine and boost your antioxidant intake, challenge yourself to pick out one or two new items every time you shop.

Switch to olive oil: This is one of the simplest swaps you can make for your heart. Replace butter with olive oil when cooking, sautéing, or baking to trade out cholesterol-raising saturated fats for healthy unsaturated fats.

Embrace a meatless day: Cutting out meat for just one day a week naturally slashes your saturated fat intake while opening up your plate to more fiber and antioxidants. Try swapping lentils, beans, or tofu in place of meat in your favorite soups, stews, and chilis.

Make half your grains whole: High fiber is key to how the Mediterranean diet lowers cholesterol. Follow the classic recommendation to ensure at least half your daily grains are whole grains—try swapping in farro for salads, building quinoa grain bowls, or choosing whole-wheat sourdough.

Pace Yourself: You don't need to transform your entire diet overnight. Begin by progressively adapting your meals to fit Mediterranean diet guidelines.

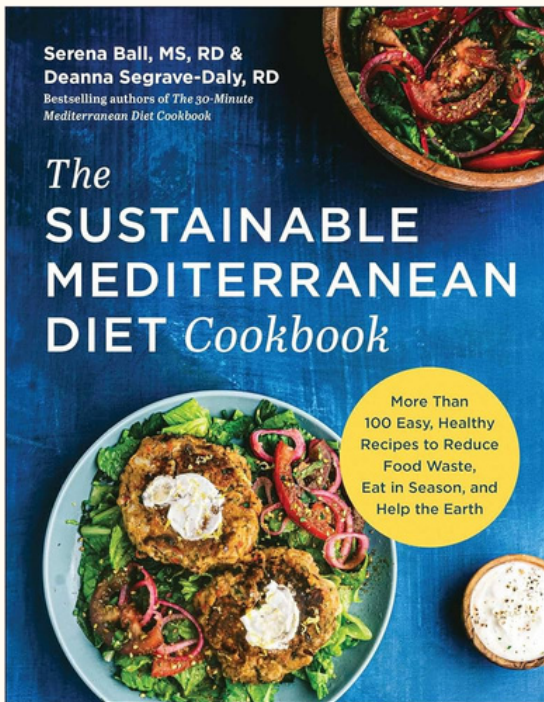
Mediterranean Diet Focus

The focus of Mediterranean Diet is **nine food groups**. Studies have shown that eating these foods from the Mediterranean dietary pattern will result in prevention and treatment of high cholesterol, heart disease and some cancers.

1. Vegetables: 3-4 servings per day
2. Fruits and Nuts: 3 to 4 servings of fruit per day and at least 1 serving of nuts per week. (1 serving = 1 cup fresh fruit or ½ cup dried fruit per day, Nuts ¼ cup per day)
3. Legumes: 1-2 servings per week (1 serving = ½ cup cooked legumes)
4. Whole Grains/Cereals: 1-2 servings per day
5. Seafood: two 3-4 oz servings per week
6. Oil/Fats: choose plant-based oils over animal fats. (olive oil)
7. Dairy: less than 1 cup per day
8. Lean Animal Protein: one 3-4 Oz serving per week
9. Alcohol: Do not start if not used to drinking, limit intake to 1-2 drinks per week.

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Book Suggestion



The Sustainable Mediterranean Diet Cookbook By **Serena Ball MS, RD & Deanna Segrave-Daly, RD**

This is a comprehensive guide with ten steps to an eco-friendlier kitchen including helpful guidance on sustainable ingredient choices, energy saving cooking methods, smarter storage and waste reduction. This book has easy to follow recipes for your health and the health of the planet.



Movement Tip

The 30-Minute Brisk Walk

You don't need intense workouts to shift your cholesterol numbers. Regular, moderate-intensity aerobic exercise—like a brisk daily walk—helps increase your HDL ("good") cholesterol while optimizing how your body processes and clears LDL ("bad") cholesterol and triglycerides from your blood.

The Goal: Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity, 5 days a week.

The "Talk Test": Pace yourself so your heart rate is elevated, but you can still hold a conversation without getting gasped for air.

No time for 30 minutes straight? Split it into three 10-minute walks throughout the day—your cardiovascular system gets the same lipid-lowering benefits!

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Nourish Your Future!

Join us as we celebrate a major milestone, The Toledo Clinic Centennial Health Fair!

August 22, Saturday, 9 am to 1 pm

Stop by our booth to discover how small, intentional everyday choices can transform your long-term health. We will be sharing details on our **Lifestyle & Culinary Medicine Program**, featuring evidence-based strategies, practical nutrition insights, and tools to help you build vibrant health from the inside out. We had love to connect, answer your questions, and share how delicious, nourishing food can truly be your best medicine!

We hope to see you there!

