



# A Simple Way to Lower Cholesterol (No Supplements Needed!)

Fiber does more than keep digestion running smoothly—it plays a key role in heart health, too. This essential nutrient, found in plant foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes, is a type of carbohydrate that the body can't fully break down. Instead, it moves through the digestive system, offering benefits along the way.

## Types of Fiber

There are two types of fiber, each with its own role in health. **Insoluble** fiber adds bulk to stool, keeping digestion regular and preventing constipation.

**Soluble** fiber, on the other hand, dissolves in water to form a gel-like substance that feeds beneficial gut bacteria, supports a healthy digestive system, and even plays a role in immune function. But one of its most impressive and well-studied benefits is helping to lower cholesterol and protect your heart.

## How Fiber Helps Lower Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fatty substance found naturally in the blood. It's essential for building cells and producing hormones, but when levels—especially of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol—get too high, it can lead to plaque buildup in the arteries, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

While genetics and lifestyle factors like diet, exercise, and smoking all play a role in cholesterol levels, increasing your fiber intake is a simple, natural way to help keep them in check. Soluble fiber is particularly powerful for heart health because it binds to cholesterol in the digestive system, preventing it from being absorbed into the bloodstream. Instead, the cholesterol is excreted from the body, helping to lower LDL levels while supporting high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good" cholesterol, which helps protect the heart.

Foods rich in soluble fiber—like oats, beans, lentils, chia seeds, flaxseeds, apples, and leafy greens—are excellent choices for improving cholesterol levels and lowering heart disease risk. Making fiber a daily priority is one of the easiest ways to support digestion, heart health, and overall well-being. Simple daily changes, like swapping refined grains for whole grains or adding fiber-rich foods to meals, can make a meaningful difference.

## Quick Ways to Add More Soluble Fiber to Your Day

- Breakfast: Oatmeal with chia seeds and berries
- Lunch: Lentil soup with whole-grain toast
- Snack: Apple slices with almond butter
- Dinner: A grain bowl with barley, black beans, and avocado

## Easy Food Swaps to Up Soluble Fiber

- Replace white rice with quinoa or farro
- Use whole wheat pasta instead of regular pasta
- Choose whole fruit over fruit juice
- Swap white bread for sprouted or whole-grain bread
- Swap out some or all of the meat for mashed beans in loaves and burgers
- Use pureed beans as a base for sauces, dressings, and dips

Source: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/fiber-full-eating-for-better-health-and-lower-cholesterol-2019062416819>

# Black Bean and Barley Bowl



This quick meal is perfect for one and takes just minutes to assemble. Having cooked whole grains and beans on hand makes healthy eating effortless. Serves 1.

## Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup canned black beans, rinsed
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup cooked barley
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup hummus
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$  medium avocado, diced
- 3 tbsp pico de gallo
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro

## Instructions:

1. Combine black beans and barley in a bowl.
2. Stir hummus and lime juice together in a small bowl, adding water to thin if needed.
3. Drizzle the dressing over the beans and barley.
4. Top with avocado, pico de gallo, and cilantro.