

Does Eating Oatmeal Help Lower Cholesterol?

By Allen Smith, eHow User

Treating High Cholesterol

For the 98.6 million residents of the United States with high cholesterol, there are three basic ways to treat the disease: diet, [exercise](#) and medication. Regardless of how high your cholesterol is, your doctor will likely suggest making changes to your diet by cutting back on saturated fat, trans fats, cholesterol and adding fresh fruit, vegetables and fiber. Fortunately, there are delicious [foods](#) in all of these categories. If your total cholesterol doesn't respond adequately to just diet and exercise, he may prescribe certain medications that either lower your LDL, raise your HDL cholesterol or both.

Soluble vs. Insoluble Fiber

Many of the foods you eat, such as fresh fruit, vegetables and oatmeal, contain one or more types of fiber. Soluble fiber is acted on by the bacteria in your intestines during the normal digestive process. Insoluble fiber is not. Good [sources of insoluble fiber](#) are wheat bran, whole grain products and vegetables. Soluble fiber performs a different function. It absorbs cholesterol from the intestines before it can be deposited on the inside of the arterial walls, causing atherosclerosis.

Adding Oatmeal to Your Diet

If you have high cholesterol, chances are your doctor will recommend that you start adding oatmeal to your daily diet. Oatmeal contains soluble fiber and attaches itself to low density lipoproteins (LDL, or the bad type of cholesterol). The LDL attached to the oatmeal is excreted through regular bowel movements before it can attach itself to the inside of your arterial walls. According to the American Dietetic Association, you should consume 25 to 35 g of fiber a day. Five to 10 g of that fiber should include soluble fiber.

Additional Benefits of Oatmeal

Chances are that if you have high cholesterol, you have other health concerns to deal with, such as diabetes or obesity. In addition to all of the benefits to lowering LDL cholesterol, oatmeal is also a great source of fiber for diabetics because it helps lower blood glucose levels. Along with treating high cholesterol and diabetes, oatmeal can also help in weight loss efforts because it helps to fill you up. Foods that make glucose levels spike often leave you feeling hungry shortly after eating them. Because oatmeal is low in sugar and takes longer to travel through the digestive tract, you'll feel full longer.