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# Phytosterols: Foods that can Lower Cholesterol

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## What is a phytosterol?

- A naturally occurring compound found in many plants.
- Known as plant sterols or stanol esters.
- Competes with or blocks cholesterol absorption in the intestine. This can help decrease your total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol.

## How do I include phytosterols in my diet?

- Make whole grains and plant-based proteins like nuts and legumes (or beans) part of your regular meals.
- Use vegetable oils and nuts like walnuts and almonds.
- Eat fruits and vegetables at every meal like corn, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, blueberries, and bananas.
- Use salad dressing, vegetable-based margarine, granola bars, orange juice and low-fat dairy products fortified with phytosterols.
- Look for a heart healthy symbol on the food label.
- Check for claims like “supports healthy cholesterol levels” or plant sterols or stanol esters listed in the ingredients.

## How much do I need to eat?

- Some research shows that eating 2 grams per day of phytosterols can reduce LDL or bad cholesterol up to 8-10%.
- Most Western style diets include only 15% compared to the Mediterranean style diet which often provides much more.
- Two grams per day can be hard to consume without using fortified foods or a supplement.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before starting a phytosterol supplement. They can interact with medications and are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration.