



# Lowering Cholesterol Naturally

Herbs and supplements that promote healthy cholesterol levels

There are many ways to lower cholesterol safely and naturally, but before we discuss these, we need to clarify some myths about cholesterol. First of all, contrary to popular belief, cholesterol is not bad. Cholesterol performs many useful functions in the body, including aiding production of bile for digestion of fats and fat soluble vitamins, acting as a building block for adrenal and reproductive hormones and serving as a vital component of skin, nerves and cell membranes.

Secondly, there is no research showing that cholesterol is the cause of heart disease. That's right. Arterial plaque is formed in response to inflammation in the arteries from toxins or infection, and can form whether your cholesterol is high or low. So, you may not actually need to lower your cholesterol.

In fact, a healthy range of total cholesterol is 200 to 250 mg./dl. Cancer rates start increasing as cholesterol levels fall below 200 because tissues become more vulnerable to environmental toxins. Cholesterol below 160 mg./dl. is dangerous. Depression, suicide, infertility and increased risk of death from heart attack are associated with low cholesterol.

Finally, it's also an oversimplification to call HDL cholesterol "good" and LDL cholesterol "bad." Cholesterol is the sterol responsible for transporting lipids (fats) through the body. Low density lipoproteins (LDL) transport fats from the liver to the cells. High density lipoproteins (HDL) transport fats from the cells back to the liver. The ratio of LDL to HDL can get out of whack, but this is due to a variety of causes.

## If You Still Feel the Need to Lower Your Cholesterol

If, after reading the above, you still feel the need to lower your cholesterol, it helps to understand how the body gets rid of excess cholesterol naturally. Since the primary use of cholesterol in the body (60% or more) is to produce bile to digest fat, increasing bile production helps get rid of excess cholesterol.

Herbs that increase bile flow are called cholagogues. Artichoke leaf is a very good choice and is often used in herbal blends to reduce cholesterol. Other cholagogue herbs include milk thistle, turmeric, burdock, yellow dock and dandelion root. One can also increase bile flow by eating good fats. Olive oil, in particular, is known for its ability to reduce cholesterol levels.

Once the bile is emptied into the digestive tract, fiber in the diet helps bind the cholesterol in it for removal from the body. So, another natural way to reduce cholesterol is to take a fiber supplement containing substances like apple pectin, guar gum and other mucilaginous fibers. Nature's Three and LOCLO are both fiber supplements containing fibers known to help reduce cholesterol.

## Other Cholesterol Reducing Supplements

Many people take statin drugs for cholesterol reduction but are surprised to learn that the compounds in these drugs were developed from a fermented rice product in Chinese medicine known as red yeast rice. Compounds in red yeast rice inhibit cholesterol production in the liver in the same way statin drugs do. This makes red yeast rice a viable natural alternative to statin drugs. However, these compounds also inhibit the production of Co-Q10, an important antioxidant for the cardiovascular system. So, anyone taking statin drugs or red yeast rice should also take Co-Q10.

Three other herbs that have proven cholesterol reducing abilities are guggul, garlic and he shou wu. Guggul is an Ayurvedic herb that helps the body metabolise fats and cholesterol. It stimulates the thyroid, which is often low in cases of high cholesterol. Research has shown guggul not only lowers total cholesterol, it also lowers low density lipo-proteins (LDL) and raises high density lipoproteins (HDL). In addition, guggul also lowers triglycerides and decreases the stickiness of blood platelets.

Garlic has numerous benefits for the circulatory system, including helping to reduce cholesterol and high blood pressure. He shou wu is another herb that benefits thyroid function. It also helps to reduce high cholesterol.

A final supplement that may help is Cholester-Reg II. This blend contains artichoke leaves, phytosterols, resveratrol and policosanol to support normal-range cholesterol and triglyceride levels, maintain normal platelet aggregation (clotting), relax smooth muscles and improve microcirculation, promote immune system strength, and provide antioxidant benefits that may help protect the heart.

## Other Things to Consider

There are many reasons why cholesterol may be high (or low). As mentioned earlier, one of these may be low thyroid. Poor gallbladder and liver function will also contribute to high cholesterol. Exposure to environmental toxins also increases cholesterol because the body uses cholesterol to bind toxins, so doing a good cleanse can also help reduce cholesterol. You may want to consider seeking the advice of a holistic physician to help determine the underlying causes of any cholesterol issues.

## Selected References

*The Cholesterol Myths: Exposing the Fallacy That Saturated Fat and Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease* by Uffe Ravnskov, MD, Ph.D.

*Ignore the Awkward: How the Cholesterol Myths are Kept Alive* by Uffe Ravnskov  
*Fat and Cholesterol are Good for You!* by Uffe Ravnskov

*The Great Cholesterol Myth* by Jonny Bowden, PhD and Stephen Sinatra, MD  
*Cholesterol and Cardiac Health* by Kimberly Balas, ND and Steven Horne  
*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light

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# Guggul Lipid Concentrate

Natural aid to normalize cholesterol and aid detoxification and weight loss

Guggul is derived from the resin of a small thorny tree known scientifically as *Commiphora mukul*. There are about eighty species in the *Commiphora* genus that grow from India to Greece, but two of the most well-known are guggul (*C. mukul*) and myrrh (*C. myrrha*). Both plants produce a resin that has been used as a perfume or incense and as a medicine, and both have similar properties.

Guggul has been used in Ayurvedic medicine (from India) for nearly 3,000 years to treat arthritis, rheumatism, water retention and obesity. It is also valued for its purifying and rejuvenating abilities.

## Cholesterol and Triglycerides

In scientific studies guggul has demonstrated the ability to lower serum cholesterol by more than 20% without other dietary modifications. Guggul also lowers triglycerides and LDL, while raising HDL. One of the active ingredients in guggul is the steroid guggulsterone, which acts as an antagonist of the farnesoid X receptor. This receptor is involved in the synthesis of cholesterol, and inhibiting it is believed to account for guggul's ability to reduce cholesterol synthesis in the liver.

Other studies have shown that guggul increases the blood's fibrin-breaking activity, while decreasing the "stickiness" of blood platelets, thereby preventing abnormal clotting. These actions may assist the body in protecting itself against heart attacks and strokes.

Additionally, guggul also appears to reduce fat, toxins and tumors, while helping to heal mucous membranes. Clinical tests were performed on twenty patients who had hypercholesterolemia associated with obesity, ischaemic heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. Guggul was administered orally to the patients for thirty days. In every case a decline in total serum cholesterol and serum lipid-phosphorus was observed after using guggul during the 30-day period. Ten of the obese patients experienced a significant decline in body weight after using guggul.

## Guggul and Weight Loss

When combined with a healthy diet and regular exercise, guggul lipids may serve as an ergogenic aid to help support

weight loss. A compound in guggul, called ushan virya, may stimulate the mobilization of fat stores throughout the body. Moving free fatty acids from fat tissue cells to muscle cells for energy increases the fat-burning potential, particularly during exercise. Recent studies indicate that guggul stimulates weight loss at the ideal pace of about one pound per week. In addition, guggul acts as a mild thyroid tonic by improving the gland's ability to absorb iodine.

## Other Uses for Guggul

Guggul has been used in India as a digestive aid for centuries. Compounds in the resin may strengthen the digestive system by increasing the amount of hydrochloric acid and other enzymes that are responsible for the breakdown of food in the stomach. Guggul may also improve nutrient absorption by acting on the enzymes found in the intestinal tract. Increasing your digestive system's ability to absorb nutrients has many benefits, including increased nutrient delivery to your body systems and overall digestive health.

Guggul has also been reported to remove deep-seated toxins from the body's soft tissues. Toxins can accumulate in and around the joints, causing joint pain, arthritis, muscle aches and rheumatism. Guggul lipids may be able to bind to these toxins and remove them through the blood stream. Removing toxins from around the body's major joints may help reduce joint inflammation and swelling that can cause pain and discomfort.

## Suggested Use

Guggul Lipid Concentrate from Nature's Sunshine Products contains only guggul lipids standardized for guggulsterone content. Suggested use for this product is two capsules with meals three times daily. In some people guggul may cause mild gastrointestinal upset. It is contraindicated with hyperthyroidism.

## Selected References

"Guggul" in *The Lawrence Review of Natural Products* (February 1995).

*Herbs that Heal* by Michael A. Weiner and Janet Weiner

*The Garden of Life* by Naveen Patnaik

[www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com)

*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light Publishing

*Herbal Therapy and Supplements* by Merrily A. Kuhn and David Winston

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# Cholester-Reg II

Herbs and nutrients to balance cholesterol and improve circulation

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Cholesterol is a vital substance in human health and plays many roles in the body. It is also blamed as being a causal factor in heart disease and many people try to reduce it by taking cholesterol lowering medications like statins.

Unfortunately, these drugs have many serious side effects. First of all, they deplete production of Co-Q10, one of the most important nutrients needed for a healthy heart and cardiovascular system. In fact, a study done at Columbia University showed that after 14 days on atorvastatin (sold under the trade name Lipitor®) people's Co-Q10 levels had dropped by 49%. Since Co-Q10 is essential for heart energy production, this can actually cause heart problems. A study in the American Journal of Cardiology showed that after six months on atorvastatin 71% of previously healthy people taking it had developed early heart muscle dysfunction.

Statins have also been shown to impair memory and cognitive function, cause erectile dysfunction, contribute to difficulty sleeping and nightmares, and cause peripheral neuropathy. Clearly, there has to be a better answer.

## Is Your Cholesterol Really High?

Before trying to lower your cholesterol, it is important to know that cholesterol can be too low as well as too high. Cholesterol levels between 200 to 250 mg./dl. are within the healthy range and there is no evidence that lowering cholesterol below 200 will reduce your risk of heart disease. On the other hand, there is ample research to show that cholesterol below 160 mg./dl. can be dangerous. Studies show that the risk of depression, suicide, violence and neurological disorders increases if blood cholesterol level drops below 160.

Furthermore, research also shows that chronic inflammation, rather than cholesterol, is the underlying cause of atherosclerosis and heart disease. Chronic inflammation is generally caused by excess consumption of refined sugars and simple carbohydrates, microbial infection and stress. So, there are actually better ways to reduce your risk of heart disease than lowering cholesterol.

However, if you do need to reduce your cholesterol, Cholester-Reg II is a supplement to consider. It contains the following substances, all of which have research behind them suggesting they can help to lower cholesterol levels.

## Artichoke Leaves

Artichoke leaf is a simple bitter that stimulates bile function. It is useful for treating indigestion, poor fat digestion, nausea and GERD. It increases bile flow and aids liver function, which can help to lower high cholesterol and improve the ratio of HDL and LDL cholesterol.

## Phytosterols

Cholesterol does not occur in plants, but plants do contain phytosterols which are chemically similar to cholesterol. Studies show that they help to lower cholesterol levels, but the action is not fully understood. They appear to compete with cholesterol for absorption. When reviewing clinical trials involving phytosterol supplementation, the FDA concluded that when consumed in the range of 1 to 3 grams in enriched foods, phytosterols resulted in statistically significant (5-15%) reductions in blood LDL cholesterol levels when compared to the placebo.

## Inositol Nicotinate

This supplement is a form of niacin (nicotinic acid) that has been used in Europe and Japan. Niacin has been shown to lower cholesterol in high doses, but also causes a flushing reaction ("niacin flush"). This flushing reaction is less severe with this form of niacin. Inositol nicotinate, like niacin, helps to lower blood cholesterol and triglycerides.

It also has a transitory vasodilatory effect, which means it causes increased blood flow to the extremities. So, it has also been used in peripheral vascular diseases, such as Raynaud's disease and intermittent claudication (cramping in the calves).

## Resveratrol (from Japanese Knotweed)

Resveratrol is a naturally occurring compound in grape skins and wine. Research suggests that it may help to inhibit the oxidation of LDL, thus helping to inhibit the formation of arterial plaque. Another possible benefit of resveratrol is reducing platelet aggregation to reduce the risk of blood clots. Besides these cardioprotective benefits, it also has some immune-stimulating and anticancer effects.

## Policosanol

More than 60 well-designed, high-quality clinical trials involving over 3,000 patients have demonstrated that policosanol has significant LDL cholesterol-lowering activity. It can also help maintain already-normal platelet aggregation (blood clotting).

## Suggested Use

The recommended dose of Cholester-Reg II is 1 capsule three times daily. Increasing dietary fiber and intake of good fats, like olive oil, butter and coconut oil, will also help to reduce cholesterol naturally.

## Selected References

*PDR for Nutritional Supplements, 2nd Edition* by Sheldon Saul Hendler with David M. Rorvik

*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light  
*The Cholesterol Myths: Exposing the Fallacy That Saturated Fat and Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease* by Uffe Ravnskov, MD, Ph.D.

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# Red Yeast Rice

## Natural alternative to cholesterol lowering drugs

Red yeast rice is a reddish purple fermented rice that obtains its color from being cultivated with the mold *Monascus purpureus*. It has been used for centuries in China in foods and in medicines. According to the Mayo Clinic, generations of Chinese have taken red yeast rice to soothe upset stomach, diarrhea and indigestion. It is also used in acupuncture therapy for spleen, liver and large intestine or colon health.

Red yeast rice was introduced to the United States during the late 1990s as a dietary supplement for the promotion of healthy serum cholesterol levels. It contains ten mevinic acids, also known as monacolins, one of which is the compound sold as lovastatin (the original statin drug). This compound inhibits cholesterol synthesis in the liver.

Unlike statin drugs, red yeast rice contains other beneficial phytochemicals, such as sterols (including beta-sitosterol, campesterol, stigmasterol and sapogenin), isoflavones and isoflavone glycosides and monounsaturated fatty acids. Sterols also have a cholesterol-lowering effect, since they are plant compounds similar in structure to cholesterol. They appear to compete with cholesterol for absorption.

Because red yeast rice contains the HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor lovastatin, the FDA has interfered with the sale of red yeast rice in some cases. However, it has yet to rule on whether they consider red yeast rice to be a dietary supplement or an unapproved drug. So, red yeast rice is still available as a natural alternative to statins.

The cholesterol lowering effects of red yeast rice have been found to be greater than those obtained from equivalent doses of a widely prescribed pharmaceutical statin drug. Recent clinical studies found that red yeast rice significantly lowered triglyceride and cholesterol levels in some individuals. In one multi-center, randomized trial of the substance in 502 patients with hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol), there was a 17% reduction of total cholesterol in the treatment group, LDL cholesterol was reduced an average of 24.6%, and serum triglyceride levels fell an average of 19.8%. HDL cholesterol rose by 12.8% in the treatment group. These results were measured after four weeks of treatment. Dosage was 600 mg. of red yeast rice twice daily (total of 1,200 mg.).

In a recent double-blind, placebo-controlled study over a 12 week period, 83 hyperlipidemic subjects received 2.4 g of red yeast rice daily with no other lipid lowering medications. They were instructed to consume a diet deriving 30% of energy from fat and no more than 300 mg. of cholesterol daily. The study found that red yeast rice significantly reduced total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and total triglycerides compared with placebo.

These and many other studies suggest that red yeast rice is effective in lowering cholesterol and triglycerides with few side effects. However, there are underlying reasons why cholesterol is high which should be addressed. Some of these include low thyroid, congestion in the liver, poor gallbladder function and exposure to environmental toxins.

Red yeast rice has other healing properties besides its effect on cholesterol. For example, when combined with a variety of herbs such as yan hu suo (corydalis), or hong hua (Chinese safflower), red yeast rice may offer pain relief from injury or trauma, according to Dr. John Chen, PhD, in a 2004 article in "Acupuncture Today."

### Suggested Use

Take 2 capsules with a meal two to three times daily. It is also a good idea to take 1 capsule of Co-Q10 with each two capsules of red yeast rice. This is important because red yeast rice interferes with the production of Co-Q10, as do statin drugs. Although few adverse reactions to red yeast rice have been reported, about one percent of people taking it experience digestive upset in the form of gas and heartburn.

Red yeast rice is also contraindicated in people with liver disease, intake of two or more alcoholic beverages a day, serious infections, recent surgeries and people suffering from yeast infections or allergies. It should also be avoided during pregnancy as cholesterol is very important to the developing fetus and it should also be avoided by nursing mothers.

### Selected References

- PDR for Nutritional Supplements, 2nd Edition*, Hendler, Sheldon Saul and Rorvik, David  
*Herbal Therapy and Supplements* by Merrily A. Kuhn and David Winston  
*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light Publishing

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