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The Portfolio Diet

A simple way to lower your cholesterol with food

The Portfolio Diet is a way of eating that lowers **LDL ("bad") cholesterol**. It was made right here in Ontario by Dr. David Jenkins and his team at the University of Toronto. Like a money portfolio, you "invest" in a few cholesterol-lowering foods **every day**. Each food lowers LDL a little. Together, they add up.

In studies, people who followed the plan lowered their LDL by about **13% to 30%**. The more of the plan they followed, the bigger the drop.

Why lower your LDL cholesterol?

Too much LDL builds up inside the walls of your arteries as **plaque**. Plaque makes arteries narrow and can cause a **heart attack or stroke**. Lowering LDL lowers that risk.

Your daily Portfolio: 4 foods + healthy oils



Portfolio food	Daily goal	Easy ways to get it
1 Nuts	45 g – a large handful (about ⅓ cup)	Unsalted almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios or peanuts. 2 tbsp natural peanut butter = about half your goal.
2 Plant protein	About 50 g of protein from soy and beans	Example: 2 cups soy milk + ¾ cup firm tofu + ¾ cup cooked lentils. Also edamame, chickpeas, black or white beans, split peas.
3 Sticky (soluble) fibre	About 20 g	Oatmeal or oat bran, pot barley, beans, eggplant, okra, apples, oranges, berries. Psyllium powder in water helps you reach the goal.
4 Plant sterols	2 g (2000 mg)	Plant sterol capsules from the pharmacy, or foods labelled "with added plant sterols." Take with meals.
+ Healthy oils	2 to 3 tbsp	Use canola or olive oil instead of butter. Add avocado to toast or salads.

Start slowly: add one step each week

1. **Week 1:** Eat a handful of nuts each day. Use them **instead of** chips, cookies or crackers.
2. **Week 2:** Switch to oatmeal or oat bran for breakfast. Add pot barley to soups.
3. **Week 3:** Drink soy milk. Eat tofu, beans or lentils every day, in place of meat.
4. **Week 4:** Add psyllium and plant sterols (see safety tips on page 2).
5. **Week 5 and after:** Cook with canola or olive oil. Keep going – it takes about **4 to 6 weeks** to see a change in your blood test.

Eat less of these

Butter, fatty or processed meats (bacon, sausage, deli meat), cheese, cream, fried foods, and store-bought cookies, muffins and pastries. These raise LDL cholesterol.

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A sample Portfolio day

Meal	What to eat	Portfolio foods
Breakfast	Oatmeal cooked in soy milk, topped with berries and 1 tbsp chopped walnuts	1, 2, 3
Snack	A small handful of almonds and an Ontario apple	1, 3
Lunch	Lentil and barley soup. Whole-grain toast with avocado. A glass of soy milk.	2, 3, +
Snack	½ cup edamame (frozen aisle) or roasted chickpeas, and an orange	2, 3
Dinner	Tofu stir-fry with eggplant, okra or green beans, and peppers, cooked in canola oil. Serve over barley or brown rice. Take plant sterols with this meal.	2, 3, 4, +

Shopping in Ontario on a budget

- Most grocery stores carry **tofu, soy milk, frozen edamame, dried or canned beans and lentils, large-flake oats and pot barley**.
- Buy dried beans, lentils, oats and nuts **in bulk or as store brands** to save money. Rinse canned beans to remove extra salt.
- Ontario farms grow lots of **soybeans, white beans and apples**. Buy local when in season.
- Choose soy milk that is **unsweetened** and has added calcium and vitamin D. Choose **unsalted** nuts.
- Find **psyllium** and **plant sterol capsules** at the pharmacy. Ask your pharmacist which product fits you.

Safety tips – please read

- **Keep taking your cholesterol medicine.** Do not stop or change any pill without talking to your doctor. This diet works well with medicine.
- **Add fibre slowly** and drink more water to avoid gas, bloating or constipation. Take psyllium with a full glass of water.
- Take psyllium at least **2 hours before or after** your other medicines. Take a **thyroid pill** at least 4 hours apart from soy foods and fibre.
- **Allergies:** if you cannot eat nuts, try sunflower or pumpkin seeds. If you cannot eat soy, use beans, lentils and peas.
- **Kidney disease or a low-potassium diet?** Ask us before eating more beans, nuts or soy.
- **Plant sterols are not for** people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or for children, unless a doctor says so.
- Nuts and oils are high in calories. **Swap** them for other foods – do not just add them.
- Ask us when to **recheck your cholesterol** (often in about 3 months).

My weekly Portfolio checklist (put a ✓ each day)

Portfolio food	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1 Nuts							
2 Soy or beans							
3 Sticky fibre							
4 Plant sterols							
+ Healthy oil							

Free help in Ontario

Health811: call **811** (TTY 1-866-797-0007) to talk to a registered dietitian for free. No referral or health card needed. You can also chat online at ontario.ca/health811.

If your family doctor is part of a Family Health Team, ask to see the team dietitian. Questions for us? Call **IMCare at 289-207-8101** or send us a secure message: www.imcare.ca/securemessage