

Viscous Fiber and Your Cholesterol

Advice from the National Lipid Association Clinician's Lifestyle Modification Toolbox



What is dietary viscous fiber?

Viscous fiber is a type of soluble fiber in plant foods. It forms a gel and isn't absorbed in your gut. Viscous fiber can bind cholesterol in your gut so it can't be absorbed. Aim for 25-30 grams of total fiber a day. Aim for 5-10 grams of viscous fiber a day as part of your total fiber intake. This can help lower your LDL-C by 5-11 points. To eat at least 5-10 grams of viscous fiber a day, eat foods with 1-3 grams of viscous fiber in a serving. Be sure to drink more water when you increase your fiber intake. Also, add fiber to your diet slowly. This will prevent feeling bloated and gassy.

Foods High in Viscous Fiber

Whole grains with 1-2 grams of viscous fiber in a ½ cup cooked

- Barley, brown rice, oatmeal, oat bran, and quinoa

Plant protein foods with 1-3 grams of viscous fiber in a ½ cup

- Black-eyed peas, chickpeas, lentils, and split peas
- Black, kidney, lima, navy, and pinto beans, and soybeans

Foods with healthy fats and 1-3 grams of viscous fiber

- ¼ avocado
- 1 TBSP whole chia seeds
- 2 TBSP ground flax seeds
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- 1 oz. almonds, peanuts, or walnuts (½ gram viscous fiber)

Vegetables with 1-3 grams of viscous fiber in a ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw

- Broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots
- Brussel sprouts, cabbage, and green beans
- Okra, parsnips, and turnips

Starchy vegetables with 2-3 grams of viscous fiber

- 1 medium sweet or white potato
- ½ cup winter squash
- ½ cup green peas

Fruits with 1-3 grams of viscous fiber

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange, peach, or pear
- 2 fresh apricots or plums
- 3 figs or 4 dried apricots or prunes
- ½ cup blackberries or 1 cup of raspberries or strawberries



Eating foods high in viscous fiber can be easy

Eating foods high in viscous fiber is a tasty way to lower your LDL-C. This menu has 14 grams of viscous fiber.

Breakfast 1 cup cooked **oatmeal** with berries and 2 TBSP **ground flax seed** (3 grams)

Lunch 1 cup chili made with **beans** and a **pear** for dessert (4 grams)

Snack ½ cup raw **carrots** and ¼ cup **hummus** (2 grams)

Dinner 1 cup of steamed **cabbage, broccoli, carrots, and/or green beans** (2 grams) with grilled chicken breast and ½ cup cooked **barley** (3 grams)

You can also use a **fiber supplement** like psyllium. Start with a small dose and mix with water. Slowly increase the dose and take as directed. **Drink extra water as you increase daily fiber intake.** Most healthy people need 9-12 cups of water a day.

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey.