

Plant sterols and cholesterol

Information for patients and families

What are plant sterols?

Plant sterols are naturally found in plant based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes and vegetable oils. Plant sterol enriched foods have larger amounts of plant sterols added to them. You can also get plant sterols in supplement form.

Why are plant sterols good?

- Plant sterols can help lower your cholesterol by 10 percent.
- Plant sterols block the absorption of some of the cholesterol in your food.

How much do I need?

- 1 to 2 grams of plant sterols per day may help to lower your cholesterol.
- Take supplements and foods enriched with plant sterols with a meal. They work best when taken with other foods.

Are plant sterols safe?

- Do not take plant sterols if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Do not give them to children.
- Tell your doctor if you are planning to increase the plant sterols in your diet.

How can I add plant sterols to my diet?

- Cook and bake with vegetable oils such as olive or canola oil, instead of butter.
- Enjoy nuts on their own or add them to your salads or yogurt. Aim for $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of nuts (like pecans, peanuts or walnuts) per day.
- Eat whole grains, such as brown rice, barley, quinoa and oats.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day such as broccoli, apple, oranges which are all sources of plant sterols.
- Include plant proteins such as chickpeas.

Plant sterol supplements

Plant sterols are found naturally in food, but it is difficult to consume enough to lower cholesterol and a supplement may be recommended. Ask your doctor about taking a plant sterol supplement. The chart below has some examples. Choose the product that is right for you.

| Supplement | Amount | Plant sterol content |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| New Roots Herbal Plant Sterol | $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp | 1.2 grams |
| Centrum Cardio multivitamin | 1 tablet | 0.5 grams |
| Swiss Natural Vegapure | 1 capsule | 0.65 grams |
| Nature Made CholestOff Complete | 1 capsule | 0.3 grams |
| Life Brand Plant Sterols | 1 capsule | 0.37 grams |

Unity Health Toronto cares about your health. For health information you can trust, visit us online at unityhealth.to/learn.

This information does not replace the advice you receive from your health care provider. If you have questions, ask your health care team.