

Controlling Cholesterol

FOR

DUMMIES®

2ND EDITION

by Carol Ann Rinzler
with Martin W. Graf, MD



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Wiley Publishing, Inc.

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Carol Ann Rinzler is the author of *Nutrition For Dummies*, now in its 4th edition, as well as *Heartburn and Reflux For Dummies*, and more than 20 other books on food and health. A former nutrition columnist for the *New York Daily News*, Carol lives in New York with her husband Perry Luntz, author of *Whiskey and Spirits For Dummies*, and their amiable cat, Katy.

Dedication

To my husband, Perry Luntz, for all the usual reasons.

Author's Acknowledgments

Every *For Dummies* book is a work of many hands, so I have many people to thank for this one.

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Introduction

What a difference a day makes. Or, to be more precise, 2,138 days. In the years since the first edition of *Controlling Cholesterol For Dummies* appeared, the medical and nutritional experts have (among other things):

- ✔ Changed the numbers that say, “This is a healthy cholesterol level.”
- ✔ Revised the definition of “bad cholesterol” (low-density lipoproteins, or LDLs) to reflect the discovery that some “bad” cholesterol may actually be just fine.
- ✔ Introduced new combo drugs that zap both the cholesterol you get from food *and* the cholesterol your own body makes.
- ✔ Re-evaluated the role of hormones in raising or lowering the risk of heart disease.
- ✔ Clarified some of the differences between how male and female bodies handle cholesterol.
- ✔ Changed the drill on which vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients may (or may not) reduce cholesterol levels.
- ✔ Reaffirmed the virtues of the Mediterranean Diet and moderate drinking.
- ✔ Added some new items to the list of foods that fight cholesterol.
- ✔ Introduced new “functional” foods that fight cholesterol (including a chocolate laced with cholesterol-buster fatty acids).
- ✔ Set up some new Web sites to provide cholesterol guidance on everything from defining cholesterol terms (what is a triglyceride, anyway?) to evaluating your own personal risk of a cholesterol-related heart attack.

In other words, the people who rule The World Of Cholesterol Medicine have been very busy little bees. Which is why you are holding this book in your hands. It contains tons of new info to help you control your cholesterol, keep your arteries as clear as a newborn babe’s, and thus keep your heart beating merrily along for years to come.

When it comes to solving life’s little problems — whether to eat that chocolate cake, whether to dye your hair orange, or whether to lower your cholesterol — I choose to follow the ancient Greek mantra, “Moderation in all things.”

In other words, I get to eat the cake about once a week; my hair is gray/

blonde, not orange; and this book is called *Controlling Cholesterol For Dummies* rather than, say, *Knocking Cholesterol Down to Zero For Dummies*.

The simple fact is that no one is perfect, but most people can be much, much better. The same principle holds true for your cholesterol levels. When cholesterol is the topic, lower is almost always better. (I talk about a few exceptions throughout this book.) But if you set a goal you can never reach — dropping 50 points off your cholesterol reading by two weeks from Tuesday — you'll fall off the wagon long before your cholesterol level falls a milligram.

My point? This book is eminently reasonable and moderate; I designed it to help you (working with your doctor, of course) keep your cholesterol within safe boundaries.

About This Book

Controlling Cholesterol For Dummies, 2nd Edition, doesn't ask you to turn yourself into an anti-cholesterol fanatic — the kind of annoying person who sneers at other people's dinner choices while acting superior about his own. (Actually, sneering and acting superior at the same time is a neat trick if you can do it. Just don't try it on your friends at dinner.)

My goal with this book is to lay out the reasons why it makes sense to control your cholesterol and then present reasonable and moderate strategies to help you reach your goal.

Some of the information, like how to translate the cholesterol numbers you get on your annual physical, is simple. Other stuff, such as guidelines you can use to determine whether you're a candidate for a heart attack — or for cholesterol-lowering medication — is more complex.

Throughout this book, the emphasis is on the idea that (here comes another catchy slogan) "Knowledge is power." In this case, it's the power to lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart attack.

Conventions Used in This Book

Don't get me wrong. I write about nutrition, food, and health for a living, but I have to admit that some books and articles about these subjects can be pretty boring. (Unless the author is instructing you how to lose 30 pounds in 30 days or lower your cholesterol by 50 points in 50 minutes. But I deal with non-fiction subjects. Sorry.) I try to remedy this sleepy state of affairs with

this book. So, if a few of my jokes don't tickle your funny bone, forgive me. After all, how funny can high cholesterol and plaque-filled arteries be?

To make this book as easy to use as possible, the following conventions are followed throughout:

- ✓ All Web addresses appear in `monofont`.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type exactly what you see in this book, pretending the line break doesn't exist.

- ✓ New terms appear in *italics* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition. I also use italics for emphasis once in a while.

- ✓ **Bold** font highlights keywords in bulleted lists or identifies the action parts of numbered lists.

- ✓ When you find information about the nutrient content of brand-name products in this book, you can assume that what you're reading was right when I wrote it. But here's the catch: Sometimes products change practically overnight. So use the numbers here as a guide, but be sure to check the product label when you shop. As poker players like to say, "Trust your friends — but cut the cards."



What You're Not to Read

Yes, you read that right. You don't have to read everything contained within these snazzy black and yellow covers. Any text in a gray box is a sidebar. Sidebars contain "nice to know" (and may I add, pretty interesting) material, but skipping them won't take away from your understanding of the subject at hand.

Additionally, anything marked with a Technical Stuff icon deals with nuts-and-bolts medical info that simply provides background information and in-depth scientific explanations about various subjects. You may skip these bits of text as well (although they provide some great info, if I do say so myself).

Foolish Assumptions

A writer has to make a few assumptions about her audience, and I've made a few assumptions about you. If you've picked up this book, I'm guessing that you fall into one or more of these categories:

- ✔ You've been told by your doctor that your cholesterol levels aren't up to par, and you have to do something about it.
- ✔ You've heard all the talk about high cholesterol in recent years, and you want to find out what all the fuss is about.
- ✔ You routinely buy every *For Dummies* book that hits the shelf, and this one is next on your list.
- ✔ You're a health-conscious individual.
- ✔ You're concerned about heart disease, and controlling the ol' cholesterol levels has become very important to you.

I've also assumed that you don't have a level of health-related knowledge to rival the U.S. Surgeon General's. If this assumption is correct, you've come to the right place. Easy-to-follow explanations are a hallmark of this book.

But if you approach the subject of controlling cholesterol with some information already tucked away in that brain of yours, don't worry — I've included plenty of info in this book for you as well.

How This Book Is Organized

This summary aims to whet your appetite for cholesterol control by giving you a glimpse of what's ahead in the 14 regular chapters, four — count 'em, four — Part of Tens chapters, and one bang-up, nutrition-chart appendix. Use this section as a thumbnail guide to what you want to read first.

Part I: Getting Up Close and Personal with Cholesterol

Chapter 1 is, well, the first chapter. It explains why you should read this book — to reduce your risk of heart attack. Chapter 2 explains the good side of cholesterol (yes, cholesterol has a good side), as well as the problems it can cause. Chapter 3 says, "Okay, now figure out your own personal risk of cholesterol-related heart disease."

Don't skip Chapter 3: The news may be better than you think. And hey, if it isn't, the rest of the book tells you how to reverse the picture and improve your odds for a long, healthy life.

Part II: Eating Your Way to Lower Cholesterol

Yes, your diet pulls some weight when it comes to your cholesterol numbers. Actually, your diet matters big time. Chapter 4 lays out principles for a cholesterol-lowering diet proposed by all the usual suspects, oops, I mean experts. Chapter 5 tells you how to assemble a cholesterol-lowering diet. Chapter 6 tells how to apply the information in chapters 4 and 5 to real life.

Part III: Leading a Cholesterol-Lowering Lifestyle

Diet matters, but so does your lifestyle. Chapter 7 is a *very* important explanation of the relationship between your weight and your cholesterol levels. Chapter 8 describes how movin' your bod can help push down your cholesterol.

Chapter 9 is *not*, repeat *not*, a both-sides-of-the-issue type of chapter. Smoking does many bad things, including lifting your cholesterol levels, so this chapter pulls no punches.

In Chapter 10, I head back into moderate territory — moderate drinking that is. In study after study, sober researchers have found that moderate drinking — one drink a day for a woman, two drinks a day for a man — appears to increase your “good” cholesterol and lower your risk of heart attack. Check it out.

Part IV: Cutting Cholesterol with Nutrients and Medicine

Chapter 11 is all about nutritional supplements, including vitamins and how they affect your cholesterol, sometimes in surprising ways. Chapter 12 is a primer on cholesterol-lowering prescription drug products — the good, the bad, and (sorry about this) the truly ugly. Chapter 13 is a guide to medicines that may adversely affect your cholesterol (and your heart). Chapter 14 is filled with recipes for fun, heart-healthy party foods so that you can continue to control your cholesterol while celebrating special occasions.

Part V: The Part of Tens

I just love this part of the book because it lets me draw up lists of odd and unusual factoids that I may not otherwise be able to include.

Chapter 15 lists ten good Web sites for heart and cholesterol info. Chapter 16 has ten nifty nutrition Web sites. Chapter 17 is one of my favorites — ten cholesterol myths. Chapter 18 tickles my historical fancy with ten really important moments in cholesterol history.

This part also includes an appendix, which contains a chart of more than 500 foods and the cholesterol, fat, and fiber content for common servings. The material, from my old friend, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is invaluable when you're putting together heart-friendly meals. So use it.

For even more info on even more foods, check out the USDA Nutrient Database (which I discuss in Chapter 16) on the Web at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/cgi-bin/nut_search.pl.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book you find a collection of handy icons in the margins. These icons highlight particularly useful information and can help you get the most out of your copy of *Controlling Cholesterol For Dummies*, 2nd Edition.



This icon makes your life easier. It signals an activity that saves you time or a bit of knowledge that I've gained from experience.



Think danger! This icon warns you to tread carefully. Pay close attention: Your health could turn out worse for the wear if you don't follow this advice.



I use this important icon to call out basic rules and information that you can file away for future reference whenever you encounter related situations.



You can skip this stuff if you want, but if you want to get really down and dirty with cholesterol details, dive in.

Where to Go from Here

No, you don't have to start at Chapter 1 and read straight through this book. As with all *For Dummies* books, this one is set up so you can read any chapter, in any order, and still come out ahead.

Sound good? Then keep on reading (starting wherever you want, of course).

