

# The portfolio diet

The Portfolio Eating plan is a recognised dietary approach to lowering cholesterol. It involves a combination of plant sterols/stanols, almonds, plant fibres and soya protein alongside regular physical activity and a largely vegetarian diet.

## The portfolio diet

Start with a diet that is low in saturated fat, high in fibre, low in salt and rich in fruit and vegetables. See the HEART UK diet guide.

Then add the following:

**Plant Stanols and/or Sterols: 2g daily.** Although naturally found in plant foods such as soyabean, corn, squash, vegetable oils and grains the amount needed for the Portfolio diet can only be achieved by eating fortified foods such as spreads, juices, yoghurts and milk. For best effect these foods should be taken at mealtimes or as part of a meal.

## How to do it:

2g is usually achieved by consuming 3 portions of a fortified food:

- 1 portion equals either 2 teaspoons of spread, 1 yoghurt or 1 glass of milk
- 1 mini yoghurt drink is equal to 3 portions

Plant sterols and stanols work by blocking cholesterol absorption from the gut. If taken in the right amounts they can lower LDL cholesterol by 10 to 15%.

**Almonds: 30g (about 23 almonds) daily.** All nuts are a good source of vegetable protein, fibre, heart healthy monounsaturated fats and vitamin E. Although the research behind the Portfolio plan is based on almonds, it is likely that other nuts have similar benefits.

## How to do it:

- eat as a snack between meals
- sprinkled on cereal, yoghurt or salad
- use almonds in cooking or try almond butter in sandwiches

**Soluble fibre: 20g daily.** Found naturally in foods such as oats/oatmeal/oat bran, barley, beans, pulses and fruits.

## How to do it:

- Aim to eat two good portions daily such as porridge or an oat based cereal for breakfast and beans/pulses/pearl barley/lentils/chick peas in your salads/casseroles/soups and pasta sauces
- In baking replace part of the flour with oats
- Add oats and dried fruits to favourite cereals
- Replace bread with rye/pumpernickel bread or oatcakes
- Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day (approx 10g soluble fibre)

**Soya protein: 50g daily.** Soya is a good source of vegetable protein, low in saturated fat and high in fibre.

This is by far the most challenging aspect of the Portfolio diet. Start by trying to achieve 25g each day and work up if you feel you can.

## How to do it:

- Soya milk can be substituted for cows milk. One pint is around 20g of soya protein (ensure yours is fortified with calcium)
- Try soya nuts and soya yoghurts as snacks
- Use soya beans/mince to replace some of the meat in your dishes
- Add tofu and/or soya beans to stir fries, casseroles, salads and on pasta

Evidence from clinical trials shows that following this diet plan carefully can bring about a 25% reduction in cholesterol levels.

## The Ultimate Cholesterol Lowering Plan

This diet incorporates elements of the portfolio diet in an easy to follow step by step plan. See our fact sheet on the **UCLP** for more information.