



# Plant Sterols and Stanols in Foods and Supplements

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

## What are plant sterols and stanols and why should you eat them?

Plant sterols are found in plants like vegetables, fruits, wheat germ, whole grains, beans, sunflower seeds, and many vegetable oils. These plant foods do not have enough plant sterols to markedly decrease your LDL-C. Plant sterols can help lower your LDL-C or "bad" cholesterol. A high LDL-C can increase your risk of heart disease. You can choose foods **supplemented** with plant sterols and stanols and/or cholesterol-lowering supplements to get the recommended amount to lower your



## How much will plant sterols and stanols lower my cholesterol?

At least 2-3 grams (2000-3000 mg) of plant sterols and stanols each day may lower your LDL-C by 7.5-12%. To get 2-3 grams of plant sterols each day, you need to eat foods supplemented with added plant sterols and stanols and/or include plant sterol and stanol cholesterol-lowering supplements. It is best if you eat food supplemented with plant sterols and stanols and/or supplements with meals at least twice daily. Plant sterols and stanols lower your cholesterol by reducing the amount absorbed in your intestines.

## Tips on Choosing Plant Sterol and Stanol-Containing Foods and Supplements

### Foods

Plant sterols and stanols are added to some milk, cheese, juice and margarine spreads and more. Check the food label for the amount of plant sterols and stanols it contains.

Foods supplemented with plant sterols and stanols have calories just as all food does. Be sure to count these calories in your daily meal plan so you do not add too many calories to your diet.

Supplement Facts	
Serving Size 2 Softgels	
Servings Per Container 50	
Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Calories 10	
Calories from Fat 10	
Total Fat 1g	2%**
Plant sterols/stanols (from esters)* 900mg	
*Percent Daily Values are not established. Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

Example of a label from a supplement that contains plant sterols and stanols.

### Supplements

All cholesterol-lowering plant sterol and stanol supplements are not the same. Read the label to find out how many pills you need to take to reach 2-3 grams (2000-3000 mg) of each day. Look for the USP label on nutrition supplements to ensure quality, potency and purity.

## What else do I need to think about when consuming plant sterols and stanols?

- Eating plant sterols and stanols may lower the absorption of some vitamins. Be sure to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, like spinach, kale, carrots, and sweet potatoes.
- There is no benefit with cholesterol lowering from taking in more than 3 grams of plant sterols and stanols each day.
- You can add together food supplemented with plant sterol and stanol to cholesterol-lowering plant sterols and stanol supplements to get 2-3 grams of plant sterols
- Talk with your registered dietitian nutritionist to find foods supplemented with plant sterols that work for you to lower your LDL-C.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.