Cholesterol and Fats in Health

Dietary cholesterol is a waxy fat-like substance found only in animal products. Dietary cholesterol can raise your blood cholesterol level, therefore, it is important to eat fewer foods that are high in cholesterol. While cholesterol is needed for normal body functions, your liver makes enough for your body's needs so that you do not need to eat any cholesterol at all.

Contributions of Cholesterol
- Is found in every cell of your body
- Serves as the building block for estrogen, testosterone, and the vitamin D that is produced upon exposure to light
- Is a major component of nerves and the brain

What are LDL and HDL cholesterol?
Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) is called the “bad” cholesterol as it carries cholesterol from the liver to other tissues. Along the way it forms deposits on the wall of arteries and other blood vessels. High levels of LDL are associated with an increased risk of heart disease.

High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) is called the “good” cholesterol as it carries cholesterol from every part of the body bringing it back to the liver for disposal. High levels of HDL are associated with a decreased risk of heart disease.

Where is Dietary Cholesterol Found?
All animal products including:
- Meat, poultry and fish
- Dairy products
- Eggs
Foods from plant Do Not contain cholesterol.

What You Can Do to Lower Your Cholesterol
- Choose foods low in dietary cholesterol
- Eat 5 servings of fruits & vegetables per day
- Eat a diet rich in dietary fiber such as beans, whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables which can have a cholesterol lowering effect
- Limit sugar and alcohol intake
- If you smoke, quit. It lowers HDL “good” cholesterol
- Exercise which will help to lower blood pressure and weight

What is a Saturated Fat?
Saturated fats are solid at room temperature and can raise your blood cholesterol level.

Foods That Contain Saturated Fat
- Animal products
- Coconut & palm oils and cocoa butter

What are Polyunsaturated and Monounsaturated Fats?
Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats make up the total of unsaturated fats. They are often found in liquid oils of vegetable origin.
- Polyunsaturated oils are liquid at room temperature. Sources are safflower, sesame & sunflower seeds corn and soybeans and their oils.
- Monounsaturated oils are liquid at room temperature but solidify upon refrigeration. Sources are canola, olive and peanut oils and avocados
Both types of unsaturated fats may help lower cholesterol when used in place of saturated fats.

Information compiled from:
http://www.americanheart.org
http://www.eatright.org
http://www.healthfinder.gov