

Cholesterol 101: Understanding the Basics – Q&A

- **Q: What are plant sterols and stanols and do they work to lower cholesterol levels?**
- A: Plant sterol/stanols or phyto sterols/stanols do work very effectively to lower cholesterol levels. They are naturally found in some plant foods, but recently have been concentrated and added strategically to certain foods to help people lower their LDL cholesterol levels. They are found in some newer types of margarine, orange juice, and milk. The way to spot a product with these powerful ingredients is to initially look for a 'cholesterol lowering' claim on the front of the package or container and then in the ingredient list look for plant sterols/stanols or phyto sterols/stanols. I know that the margarine manufacturers Benecol, Promise, and Smart Balance make various versions of margarine and at least one type from each manufacturer contains this special ingredient. Also the name of the orange juice that contains these is Minute Maid Heart Wise.
- **Q: Is there a special diet that lowers cholesterol?**
- A: If you go to nih.gov and search for the TLC diet (TLC stands for therapeutic lifestyle change) a nice long pdf document will come up that in some detail explains the TLC diet that is the big well accepted nutrition plan for lower cholesterol.
- **Q: Where do I start with weight loss?**
- A: First, write down all your reasons why you want to lose weight and read it 3 times every day. Then remember that it's normal to have set backs when trying to lose weight, so don't give up when the going gets tough...dust yourself off and keep working. Then, once you're ready, start keeping records in a notebook. Keep a food, weight, and exercise journal....all in one journal. For food, have one page per day and track your food, drink, and your portions. Track in your food journal multiple times per day...so you don't forget to track anything. Track your weight weekly...even if you think you gained, still weigh in and record it. And track your exercise daily, even if you take a rest day, record that. This would be a solid start to a weight loss push.