

Title: Will Taking Fish Oil Help Lower My Cholesterol?

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Abstract: Fish oil is most likely to help lower cholesterol in patients who have high triglyceride levels. However, it also may worsen LDL levels ("bad cholesterol"). If you would like to try fish oil before beginning a prescribed medication for cholesterol, it is safe to try along with cholesterol monitoring and may have some benefit. For those with high LDL levels, it may be best to take fish oil with a cholesterol-lowering medication like a statin to improve both LDL and triglyceride levels.

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Effects - Fish oil is made up of omega-3 fatty acids, which are a kind of fat that is better for your health. Fish oil may be most helpful to you if your cholesterol is high because of high triglycerides. Triglycerides are one part of cholesterol. Fish oil can lower triglycerides, but also may worsen LDL. LDL is another part of cholesterol that is also known as “bad” cholesterol.

Recommendation - If you have high triglycerides you may want to consider taking fish oil. The American Heart Association has said that fish oil may decrease triglyceride levels if 2-4 grams are taken per day. If you have high LDL, it may be best to take fish oil with another medicine that lowers cholesterol, like a statin.

Side Effects – There is an increased risk of bleeding if taking fish oil. Some people have nausea or diarrhea, especially if they take the pills without food. Others dislike the fishy taste the pills leave in their mouth.

Cost/Availability – You can buy fish oil supplements at most pharmacies and many grocery stores. A bottle of 60-100 pills may cost between \$5 and \$15.