

Body | **CHOLESTEROL****DID YOU KNOW?**

“High cholesterol levels can lead to build up, not just in artery walls, but in other places too – even the eyeballs,” says Simon Bandy, a nutritional supplement expert with Health Plus ([healthplus.co.uk](http://healthplus.co.uk)).

“Known as a corneal arcus, this looks like a white ring around the iris and is visible to your optician. Vision is not normally affected and the problem can usually be reversed over time if cholesterol levels are controlled.”

your sugar intake, as this too produces ‘internal dampness’. The Western explanation is that eating too much sugar, and drinking coffee and tea, are stressful to the adrenal glands which produce hormones, of which cholesterol is a pre-cursor.”

**Plant sterols and oats**

“Plants make natural substances called phytosterols, which are structurally similar to cholesterol,” explains Dr Brian McDonogh, a physician in nutritional medicine who runs Health Wise Workshops (Tel: 01403 258 351). “When ingested they reduce the absorption of cholesterol within the intestines and increase excretion of it via the stools. Phytosterols can reduce LDL cholesterol by 10 to 15 per cent. Foods that are high in phytosterols include sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, asparagus, cauliflower, spinach, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes and olive oil.

Beta-glucan is a form of soluble fibre found in cereals such as barley and oats. It can reduce total cholesterol by nine to 15 per cent and LDL cholesterol by nine to 15 per cent. The beta-glucan forms a barrier which slows down the absorption of cholesterol and encourages its excretion through the stools, before it can be absorbed into the bloodstream.”

**Statins and side effects**

“Statins are a group of drugs used to lower levels of LDL cholesterol in the blood, helping to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke,” explains Dr Sarah Brewer, author of *Cut Your Cholesterol* (£4.99, Quercus). “They work by blocking the action of an enzyme (HMG-CoA reductase) in the liver, so the amount of cholesterol you make is reduced. Statins are generally considered safe but, like all medicines, they can have side effects such as reducing production of a nutrient called co-enzyme Q10 which is needed for energy production in cells, especially muscle cells. This may explain why one in 10 people taking statins experience some form of muscle-related side effects. Supplements like Healthspan’s Co-enzyme Q10 capsules, £15.95, may help to reduce these side effects and do not affect the cholesterol-lowering action of statins.”

**TRY THIS**

A tasty way to lower your cholesterol is with Oatly Fresh enriched oat drink, £1.64 for one litre. One 250ml glass of Oatly provides a third (1g) of the daily requirement of beta-glucan and is naturally low in saturated fat.

**OR THIS**

One 40g serving of oatbran contains 83 per cent of the recommended daily amount (3g) of beta glucan – the soluble fibre absorbed into bloodstream that helps remove cholesterol. Mornflake Oatbran, (£1.49 for 500g) is therefore a great breakfast option – just sprinkle on top of your breakfast cereal.