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It's Okay to Eat Your Beef

Are you, or do you know, someone who has been told to cut the fat and watch the cholesterol in the diet? Most of us could answer 'Yes' to that question. Now, how many of us almost automatically assume that means no beef or pork, just fish and chicken? Again, most of us would answer 'Yes'. Then, we go around complaining, or depressed, about our menus, right?

Well, it doesn't have to be that way! A recent study followed people with high blood cholesterol for 18 months. Part of the time they got to eat red meat, part of it they were limited to white meats. All the diets were reduced to less than 30% of calories from fat, had between 8-10% of calories from saturated fat, and less than 300 mg of cholesterol per day. Those are standard, cholesterol-lowering recommendations. And, surprise, both groups ended up with lower blood cholesterol, lower LDL (bad) levels, and higher HDL (good) levels! So, if you are willing to be picky about which cuts of beef you eat, and selective about how that meat is cooked, you can eat your beef, instead of beefing about your diet!

Which ones can you pick? You want to get the leanest cuts. That means ones with little or no marbling. Usually, the leanest cuts are the eye round, top round, shoulder roast, round tip, top sirloin, bottom round, and top loin. You also need to trim all visible fat off the piece, preferably before you cook it. If you cook it with the fat on, some of that fat will be absorbed and you won't be able to take it out later.

Then, you need to cook it with no added fat. Boil, bake or roast it. Lean meat benefits from slow, moist cooking, but it can be tough if it is cooked too long or at too high a temperature. So braising, simmering, and pot roasting are good choices. If you make it the day

before and skim excess fat off after it cools, you can reduce the fat even further.

And finally, remember to eat modest portion sizes. A piece of meat about the size of the palm of your hand is usually about 3 oz, or one serving. Ask for a doggie bag to take the rest of that restaurant meal home, and enjoy it again tomorrow. No beefing!