

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

Sept. 6, 2007

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

### Nutty Way to Lower Cholesterol

Maybe you've heard of the Portfolio Eating Plan? Or are you just looking for a way to bring your cholesterol levels down before the doctor puts you on medications? Of course the publicity makes it sound like an easy plan to follow. And the results certainly seem promising. So, will it really live up to its promise? Here's the evidence so far.

The Portfolio Eating Plan has 4 parts. Each is aimed at replacing saturated fat in the diet with a more healthful choices. It has been developed and tested by doctors at the University of Toronto. Compared to the effects of taking lovastatin (a cholesterol-lowering medication), this diet had almost as big an effect. Blood cholesterol levels went down by almost 30% in the people who stuck to the meal plans.

But the number of people who have been tested on the diet is still pretty small, barely 100 people. So, whether it will have as big an effect on everyone in a big study remains to be seen. And while none of the Plan foods is hard to find, it might be difficult to get the amounts used in the diet tests.

This is what the Portfolio Eating Plan involves. In a 2,000 calorie diet that is low in fat, you need to eat these foods every day: 30 grams of almonds, 20 grams of viscous fiber, 50 grams of soy protein, and 2 grams of plant sterols. That's only about 4 ounces, or half a cup of total ingredients. But if you look at how much you have to eat to get that amount, it might not seem so easy.

The almonds are probably the easiest, and certainly the tastiest, part. Thirty

grams of almonds is only 1 ounce, or about 23 almonds. That's how much will fit in one of those little "strong" mint tins. It's easy to fill a tin every morning and snack on it sometime during the day. You can toast, chop or blanch them. You can add them to salads, cereal, soup or fish. Almonds are delicious.

Next, 20 grams of viscous fiber. Viscous fiber is not the kind of fiber in whole wheat or lettuce. It is found in oatmeal, barley, beans and a few vegetables. Twenty grams are not quite 2 tablespoons. But food is not pure fiber. It takes a lot of beans to get 20 g. For example, 1 cup of cooked kidney beans is one of the best sources, and it only has 6 g of fiber! That means 3 ½ cups of beans to get the required fiber dose. Or if you prefer, it's 5 cups of cooked oatmeal a day.

The soy protein prescription could be almost as difficult. A cup of soy milk has only 8 g of protein, so getting 50 g means 6 cups, or a quart and a half of soy milk a day. Tofu might have as much as 10 g in a cup, tempeh could have as much as 18 g per half cup. But that's still a lot of soy to eat. Soy burgers have about 10 g each.

The fourth part of the diet prescription is plant sterols. These are plant ingredients that prevent our bodies from absorbing cholesterol. Avocados, some beans and nuts, and a few vegetables contain plant sterols. But the amounts are tiny. The best sources of sterols are in certain margarines, especially Take Control® and Benecol®. A little over one tablespoon of these margarines would give you the 2 grams you need, but it would take 15 small avocados (the best natural source) to get your daily dose.

Can it be done? Certainly! Would it taste good? It certainly could. The recipes on the Portfolio Eating Plan website look delicious. Will it work for you? It might, if you're willing to stick to the plan. Even if you don't stick to it completely, using any part

of it will probably help. But talk to your doctor before you make any drastic changes. Do not stop taking any prescribed medications without talking to your doctor!

Here's a recipe from the Portfolio Eating Plan website recipe section. It's quick, colorful and healthy. Plus, it's cool for a hot summer evening. Enjoy!

### Barley and Almond Salad

1 C quick-cooking pearl barley	1 can (15 oz) kidney beans, rinsed
1 large red bell pepper, diced	3/4 C diced zucchini
1/2 C slivered almonds, toasted	1/3 C diced scallions
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil	1 Tbsp vinegar (balsamic is best)

Low sodium vegetable broth, salt, pepper as needed

Cook barley in low sodium broth according to package directions until tender. Transfer barley to colander and rinse quickly with cold water to chill. Put in large salad bowl and stir in other ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste. Toss to mix well. Serves 4.

*Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.*

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING