

Stanols, Sterols, and Heart Health

FAQs

What are Stanols and Sterols?

Sterols are a group of naturally occurring compounds that are part of animal and plant cell membranes. Adding hydrogen to sterol molecules forms stanols, which are found less abundantly in nature.

How do Stanols and Sterols Work?

Both sterols and stanols are structurally similar to cholesterol, yet they are not synthesized by the body and are minimally absorbed by the intestines. Because of their similarity in shape, they get in the way of cholesterol absorption when they travel through your digestive tract. Therefore, less total cholesterol is absorbed by your body when plant sterols and stanols are present. With regular use, plant sterols and plant stanols can result in a reduction in LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, but neither has an effect on blood levels of triglycerides or HDL cholesterol.

How Much Do I Need?

The National Cholesterol Education Program recommends that people who have high cholesterol get 2 grams of sterols or stanols a day. Eating more than 2 grams of sterols or stanols a day does not provide additional cholesterol-lowering benefits.

What are Good Sources of Sterols and Stanols?

Plant sterols and stanols are found naturally in fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, cereals, legumes, vegetable oils, rice bran, and wheat germ.

Some manufacturers have also started adding stanols and sterols to foods. Some of these products and their sterol/stanol content are listed below:

Product	Ingredient	Serving Size	Calories	Fat (grams)	Stanol/Sterol Content
Benecol Light Spread®	Stanol	1 Tbsp.	45	5	0.85
Take Control Light Spread®	Sterol	1 Tbsp.	45	4.5	1.7
Yoplait Healthy Heart® Yogurt	Sterol	6 oz.	180	1.5	0.4
Minute Maid® Premium Heart Wise™ Orange Juice	Sterol	8 oz.	110	0	0.4
Nature Valley Healthy Heart Chewy Granola Bars	Sterol	1 bar	160	4	0.4
Rice Dream® Heart Wise™ Beverage	Sterol	8 oz.	130-140	2	0.4

