1 million Canadians are expected to feel the effects of SAD (seasonal affective disorder) this winter. Don't let the winter blues get you down, try our 10 mood boosting foods on page 148.

$1,715 is the amount that the average Canadian household spent on restaurant food in 2008. Cook a romantic meal for your sweetheart at home this Valentine's day. Try our recipes on page 140.
Lower your cholesterol

Increase your longevity  Bryce Wylde, HD, RNC

By now we all know we need to eat a healthier diet, including more brightly coloured fruits and vegetables. Part of the reason is to keep cholesterol levels optimized. But even when we follow this practice, we often unsuspectingly consume foods with higher-than-desired unhealthy fats.

If you want to live well beyond 60 and are entertaining the idea of living beyond 100, then it’s time to consider your cholesterol levels.

The Okinawa Centenarian Study began in 1975. Since then researchers have studied, and continue to study, the extraordinary longevity of the people of Okinawa, Japan, the area with the world’s longest life—and health—expectancy.

Researchers have found that one of the common denominators for long life appears to be healthy HDL (good) cholesterol levels. When LDL (bad) cholesterol levels are too high, or the ratio of good to bad cholesterol is disproportionate, plaque deposit is almost inevitable. It may take many years, but when a coronary artery is finally clogged with plaque, the result may be a sudden loss of blood and oxygen to the heart—a heart attack.

In order to accomplish the goal of optimal cholesterol levels, you may have to exercise some willpower while remaining balanced, never fanatical.

3 CHOLESTEROL-LOWERING FOODS

**Beans**
They really are good for your heart.
High in soluble fibre, lentils, kidney beans, black beans, chickpeas, and soybeans can be added to soups, stews, and salads. One-half cup (125 mL) of beans a day can lower cholesterol by 10 percent.

**Oats**
Oats contain the soluble fibre beta glucan, which binds to cholesterol in your digestive system and then eliminates it from the body. Add oats, oat bran, or oat flour to muffins, cookies, and pancakes.

**Nuts**
Unsalted, raw or dry-roasted almonds, walnuts, and pecans contain unsaturated fats and fibre. Eat 1/4 cup (60 mL) of nuts five times a week to lower your risk of heart disease by 25 percent.
7 rules to maintain healthy cholesterol levels

1. Count the ORAC value
   Ensure that every food you eat has the highest possible antioxidant value. The antioxidant value of foods is measured by its oxygen radical absorbance capacity or ORAC value. If you end up following only one rule in your diet, make it eating foods with the highest ORAC value, or in other words, foods that best protect the lining of your arteries.
   Your diet should include beans, berries, and other colourful fruits and vegetables—at least seven to 10 servings a day. Incorporate veggies into salads and stir-fries, and add fruit to cereal, plain low-fat yogourt, or smoothies. Purchase produce labelled "certified organic" whenever possible.

2. Savour each bite
   Many people with high cholesterol eat too quickly. Chew your food until it is liquefied, before you swallow it.
   Take digestive enzymes with larger meals if you currently experience indigestion, heartburn, gas, or bloating. Digestive enzymes can help ensure that you absorb everything you ingest. Remember, you are what you eat, but more importantly, you are what you absorb.
   If you do tend to rush, I recommend a broad-spectrum enzyme in capsule form. These supplements are high in plant-based proteases (to digest proteins), lipase (to properly assimilate fats), and amylase (to break down carbohydrates). Each contributes to the management of healthy cholesterol levels.

3. Listen to your body
   Don't skip meals. Eat only when you're hungry. Listen to your body for signs of hunger or low blood sugar. You know you've waited too long to eat when you get the shakes or become forgetful, irritable, or light-headed.
   Eat six times a day (three main meals, two snacks, and a couple of squares of 70 percent chocolate in the evening).
   If you use nutrition bars or shakes, use only the well-formulated ones that provide fewer than 300 calories per serving, with less than 15 percent of these calories coming from carbohydrates (including sugars) and at least 40 percent of the calories coming from protein. Consume such snacks between meals only, and avoid the ones with preservatives and artificial colours.

4. Plan ahead
   For convenience, prepare some of your staple foods in bulk in advance. Make sure these dishes contain plenty of fibre. Don't hesitate to pre-boil grains, pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and even grill your lean meats and fish in advance. Use airtight glass containers to freeze and store food. Avoid storing food in plastic, microwaving, frying, and barbecuing, instead grill, steam, broil, and boil.

5. Set limits
   Because overeating and high blood cholesterol are highly correlated, try eating smaller meals, and serve them on small dessert plates so that your plate still looks satisfyingly full of food.
   Earn your food by remaining active, but don't focus too much on calorie counting. When you eat nutrient-dense, cholesterol-lowering food, you automatically consume fewer calories.
   Wait at least 30 minutes from the time you've started your first helping before you even think about having seconds. It takes a minimum of 10 to 15 minutes to eat the amount of food on your plate, and then about 20 minutes for your brain to register the satisfaction of having eaten the food.

6. Keep hydrated
   Drink plenty of water, but make sure to drink most of it between meals so you don't dilute your digestive enzymes during mealtime. Consider adding a soluble fibre to your glass of water before bed.

7. Avoid these cholesterol culprits
   When you remove harmful, oxidizing foods from your diet, you reduce the chances that plaque will build up in the arteries. Limit the following:
   **BAD FATS**
   Obtain only 20 to 35 percent of your calories from fats. Avoid trans fats, hydrogenated fats, and saturated animal fats. Use olive oil. A better butter consists of one part olive oil to one part butter; it spreads well.
   **SUGAR**
   Take a pass on sugar and other sweeteners. Use stevia or moderate amounts of agave nectar as replacement sweeteners.
   **REFINED CARBOHYDRATES**
   Skip white pasta, bread, cakes, potato chips, and cookies; opt for whole grain products.
   **ALCOHOL**
   Limit alcohol intake to a glass of red wine a day.
Here are a few recipe ideas to get you started on a routine toward optimal cholesterol levels. The key to a healthy diet is to keep it simple.

HEART-HEALTHY SALMON

1 1/2 lb (750 g) wild salmon with skin
1/2 tsp (2 mL) garlic powder
1/2 tsp (2 mL) black pepper
1/4 cup (60 mL) low-sodium teriyaki sauce
1 Tbsp (15 mL) golden flaxseed, freshly ground

Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). While waiting, oil baking sheet with olive oil.

Place salmon skin side down on baking sheet. Sprinkle with garlic powder and pepper, then spread with teriyaki sauce.

Bake salmon until opaque in centre, or about 20 minutes. For best results, do not overbake. Remove from oven; sprinkle freshly ground flaxseed evenly over salmon.

Serves 4.

EACH SERVING CONTAINS:
334 calories; 45 g protein; 15 g total fat; 2 g sat. fat; 0 g trans fat; 3 g carbohydrates; 1 g fibre; 363 mg sodium

POPEYE SALAD

1 - 9 oz (255 g) bag organic baby spinach, washed well
1/4 cup (60 mL) prepared light poppyseed dressing
1 cup (250 mL) bean sprouts
2 tomatoes, diced
1/2 cup (125 mL) white mushrooms, sliced
1 avocado, chopped
1 cup (250 mL) blanched almond slivers
4 chives, minced

In large bowl, toss spinach with dressing. Lay bean sprouts evenly across dressed spinach. Top with tomatoes, mushrooms, and avocado. Garnish with almonds and chives. Chill and serve within 1 hour.

Serves 6.

EACH SERVING CONTAINS:
226 calories; 9 g protein; 18 g total fat; 2 g sat. fat; 0 g trans fat; 14 g carbohydrates; 7 g fibre; 156 mg sodium

Bryce Wyld, HD, RNC, is one of Canada’s most respected complementary health experts. He is host of the TV show Wyld On Health. theantioxidantprescription.com