

# Family and Consumer Sciences “Connections” in Irion County

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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## Wash your fruits and veggies!



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Wash your fruits and vegetables today and every day before you eat them. Even if you don't eat the skin, rind, or peel, you can still transfer icky stuff with your hands (or by cutting multiple things with the same knife).

Federal health officials estimate that nearly 48 million people are sickened each year by food contaminated with harmful germs. Some of the causes might surprise you.

Most of us know to be careful with animal products like raw or undercooked meat, eggs, and seafood. But many of us don't realize that fresh produce can also be the culprit. In recent years, the United States has experienced several large outbreaks of illness caused by contaminated fruits and vegetables including spinach, tomatoes, cantaloupe, and lettuce.

The FDA says fresh produce can become contaminated in many different ways, some of the most common being:

1. **During development:** Fruits and veggies may become contaminated by animals, harmful substances in the soil or water, and poor hygiene among workers while the produce is still growing.
2. **After harvest:** Harvested produce passes through many hands between the farm and your kitchen, increasing the contamination risk if proper safety and hygiene protocols aren't followed.
3. **After purchase:** Contamination can even occur after the produce has been purchased by you—during food preparation, or through inadequate storage. This applies equally to organic produce—in certain cases, those can actually provide a higher chance of disease transmission (because we assume the “organic” label makes them harmless and don't always wash them.)

### Useful Resources:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org)

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)



# Non-HDL Cholesterol

Heart disease is currently the number-one cause of death in the United States (and much of the world). One of the most reliable ways to predict heart health and your risk for developing heart disease in the future is a simple blood test to check your cholesterol levels. And one of the most reliable ways to control cholesterol levels is—you guessed it—a heart-healthy diet.

## How is standard cholesterol level calculated?

Cholesterol levels have been tested the same way for years. Your doctor will take a quick blood sample and your results will be given to you as one number, calculated by taking your HDL (good cholesterol) plus your LDL (bad cholesterol), plus 20% of your triglycerides (fat carried in your bloodstream).

Ideal cholesterol levels are generally below 200 mg/dL, “borderline high” cholesterol is 200-239 mg/dL, and 240 mg/dL and above is considered “high.”

## So what’s non-HDL cholesterol?

In recent years, researchers and doctors have been testing the accuracy of non-HDL cholesterol in assessing risk for heart disease. While looking at LDL (bad) cholesterol can tell us a lot about heart health, it doesn’t take triglycerides into account at all. Instead, doctors are beginning to look at non-HDL cholesterol, which is calculated by subtracting HDL (good) cholesterol from total cholesterol—leaving you with just the “bad” numbers (LDL and triglycerides), allowing your doctor to more accurately evaluate your heart disease risk.

Pay extra attention to what you’re eating and how it will affect your cholesterol levels (HDL and LDL). If you’re at-risk for heart disease, ask your doctor about getting a non-HDL cholesterol test done, too!

In order to keep your cholesterol in check, swap out a few of your cholesterol-raising favorites for heart-healthy, HDL-raising choices instead. Try these:

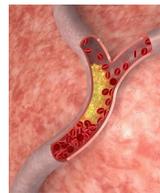
- High fiber foods including oatmeal, oat bran, flax seeds, and healthy grains like quinoa.
- Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids such as fish. Mackerel, lake trout, herring, tuna, salmon, and halibut are all super high in omega-3s.
- Snack on walnuts and almonds, but watch your calories—a handful will do.
- Use olive oil instead of butter.

Further prevent heart disease by:

- Eating a nutrient-dense diet
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Exercising regularly
- Monitoring your blood pressure (in addition to cholesterol)
- Not smoking
- Limiting alcohol use
- Managing any medical conditions

When it comes to cholesterol, just remember:

***H = Healthy***  
***L = Lower it***



As cholesterol builds up in the arteries, they begin to narrow, which lessens or blocks the flow of blood.

### **FACTS:**

73.5 million adults (31.7%) in the U.S. have high LDL or “bad” cholesterol.

Fewer than 1 out of every 3 adults (29.5%) with high LDL cholesterol has the condition under control.

Less than half (48.1%) of adults with high LDL cholesterol are getting treatment to lower their levels.

People with high total cholesterol have approximately twice the risk for heart disease as people with ideal levels.

## Have a little thyme on your hands?



It's time for some thyme! This delicate delight is known to add some pleasantly pungent properties to meals in need of a makeover – whether you're fighting a formidable illness or just need a little spice in your life, thyme can be that beneficial boost you're looking for!

Thyme is like the Swiss army knife of spices – it covers all the bases when it comes to defending against dangerous health-related risks (and is great in a variety of foods)! Here's a short list of what this powerful little plant has to offer:

- Thyme is a solid source of iron, manganese, copper, dietary fiber, and vitamins A and C.
- Thyme has a long history of use in natural medicine – most commonly with chest and respiratory problems including coughs, bronchitis, and chest congestion.
- Thyme contains flavonoids – making it extremely high in antioxidants.

- Thyme is known for its antibacterial properties and might have a future as an acne-fighting ingredient.
- Thyme oil includes a substance called *carvacrol*, which is known to have a positive effect on your feelings and mood.

### Thyme to spice things up!

- Add thyme to your favorite pasta sauce recipe.
- Fresh thyme adds a fantastic fragrance to omelets and scrambled eggs.
- Hearty beans (such as kidney beans, pinto beans, and black beans) have a tremendous taste when seasoned with thyme.
- When baking or poaching fish, place some sprigs of thyme on top for a mouth-watering medley of flavor.
- Season soups and stocks by mixing in some fresh thyme.

Now that you've got a few ideas, don't waste any more time ... go to your local grocery store and get your hands on some thyme today!

## Added Sugars



Sugars can be naturally present in foods, such as fructose in fruit or lactose in milk, or they may be added to food. Added sugars, also known as caloric sweeteners, are sugars and syrups that are added to foods at the table or during processing or preparation. Added sugars provide calories but few or no nutrients. Some of the names for added sugars are brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar or syrup. Check the nutrition facts label for potential added sugars in your food.

### Improve Your Mental Health and Mood

Regular physical activity can help keep your thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp as you age. It can also reduce your risk of depression and may help you sleep better. Research has shown that doing aerobic or a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities 3 to 5 times a week for 30 to 60 minutes can give you these mental health benefits.

**Source:** [www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics)

