

# Game for The Portfolio Diet?



📷 Portfolio Diet (Clockwise): People should have more of nuts, fruits, veggies, tofu, oatmeal, etc; Typically, men tend to have higher levels of cholesterol throughout life than women; and It's a plant-based diet , Thinkstock

Every now and then, there comes a new diet on the block with the promise of weight loss. However, weight loss is not everything. Here's a diet that has shown to lower cholesterol and thereby, reduce risk of cardiovascular issues. We asked experts for their take on the Portfolio Diet...

## The Portfolio Diet

Researchers at University of Toronto, Canada, stated that besides reducing LDL (or bad) cholesterol by about 30 per cent when combined with a low-saturated fat diet, the Portfolio Diet limited other factors for an estimated 13 per cent reduction in the overall risk for coronary heart disease, which includes angina and heart attack.

This plant-based way of eating is said to reduce risk factors for cardiovascular disease including blood pressure, triglycerides and inflammation. The diet has four main components and is based on a 2,000 calorie diet:

- 45 grams of nuts

- 50 grams of plant protein such as soy, or pulses like beans and peas
- 20 grams of viscous soluble fibre from oats, eggplant, apples, etc.
- 2 grams of plant sterols (natural compounds with cholesterol-lowering properties naturally found in fruits, vegetables, nuts and cereals).

Associate professor, John Sievenpiper said, “We’ve known the Portfolio Diet lowers LDL cholesterol, but we didn’t have a clear picture of what else it could do. This study allows for greater clarity and certainty about the effects of the diet and its health potential.”

### **Expert speak**

The Portfolio Diet comprises foods or ingredients that are known to have cholesterol-lowering effect and is comparable to the effect of statin – the cholesterol-lowering drug. Dr Deepti Bagree, Head of Department, Healthcare, RESET: Holistic Living Concepts, says that it’s important to minimise use of saturated fats and add some form of physical activity daily to maximise results of portfolio diet. The components of the Portfolio Diet such as fibre and the other help lower cholesterol however, there are many such superfoods that need to be added to make food more balanced, nutritious and sustainable.

### **Cholesterol issues**

Cholesterol levels vary as per age, weight, and gender. Over time, a person’s body tends to produce more cholesterol, meaning that all adults should check their cholesterol levels regularly, ideally about every four to six years, says Dr Narayan Gadkar, cardiologist consultant, Zen Multi Specialty Hospital. He adds, “Typically, men tend to have higher levels of cholesterol throughout life than women. A man’s cholesterol levels generally increase as they age. However, women aren’t immune to high cholesterol. A woman’s cholesterol often increases when she goes through menopause.”

## **Would they recommend it?**

“This is a healthy diet and does not contain non-vegetarian food. Thus, to recommend for everybody is challenging. However, everyone should include a part of the Portfolio Diet in their routine diet plan,” opines Dr Santosh Kumar Dora, senior cardiologist, Asian Heart Institute. People should have more of fruits, vegetables, nuts especially almond, tofu, oatmeal breakfast, etc. People who are unable tolerate statins (drug used to reduce cholesterol) or having high cholesterol despite taking optimal dose of statins should definitely be recommended this kind of diet plan.

Dr Bagree says that there is no one specific diet for every individual. She says, “Each individual has a unique genetic and biochemical make-up so giving same diet will not serve the purpose. Foods that are known to help improve health and blood parameters can be added along with other superfoods customised according to the health goals of an individual. One should look at overall lifestyle modifications like eating healthy, controlling total oil consumption, keeping saturated fats to minimum, moderate activity levels, adequate sleep, stress management through yoga and meditation are great ways to stay healthy.”

## **Checking lipid profile**

One may check his/her lipid profile before and after three months of adopting the Portfolio Diet to see its efficacy. Majority of blood cholesterol is contributed by body's internal synthesis. So despite this diet plan, some people having excessive internal cholesterol synthesis may still have high blood cholesterol. In these cases, drug like statin is necessary to reduce blood cholesterol level, says Dr Dora.