The Right Bran for Lowering Cholesterol

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Everybody knows that comfort foods usually raise cholesterol. But how about a comforting food that lowers cholesterol and is fat-free? The surprising fact is that bran is a comfort food and it lowers cholesterol, but you need to choose the right kind of bran to get the cholesterol lowering benefits.



Any high-fat food, for instance, whipping cream, or ice cream, or any fried food, has a comforting effect on the digestive tract. The fat in the comfort food mixes with the other contents of your digestive tract to make them smoother. The muscles around your stomach don't have to work as hard to digest bits and pieces of food, and cells in your colon release a hormone named cholesystokinin. This comfort food hormone sends a signal to your brain that you are full.

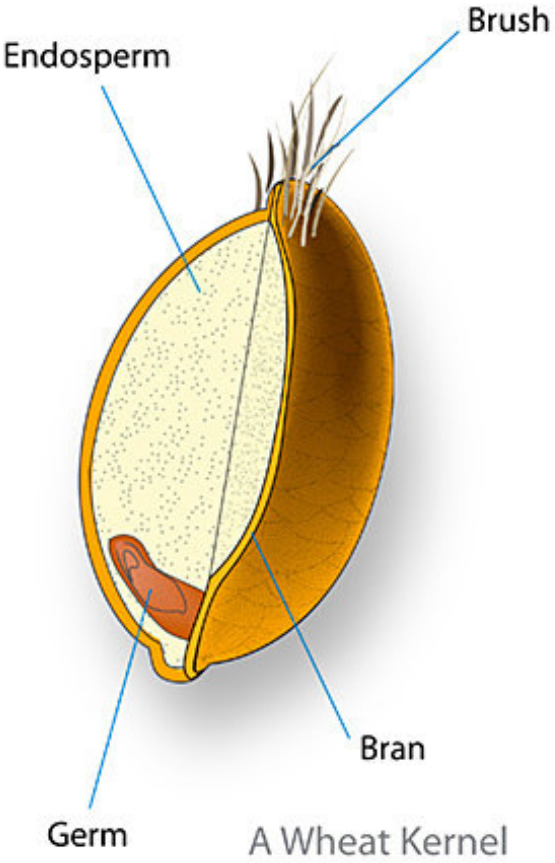
The bran in oatmeal does not contain fat but it does stimulate the release of cholesystokinin. The fibers in oat bran absorb water and make the contents of your stomach just as creamy as if you had eaten something high-fat. Eating oatmeal relaxes your stomach and helps you feel full.

It is not necessary to eat a crunchy oat cereal to get this benefit from oats. In fact, it's better than you use the oats as an additive in other smooth, moist foods so the bran fiber is maximally dispersed in your stomach. With oats, the better it tastes, the more it works for you.

Scientists do not know why bran from oats has this comforting quality but bran from wheat does not. Some of the nutritional components of oats help the kidneys eliminate excess sodium so you can lose water weight, without losing other important electrolytes.

And, as you may have heard, eating oats as part of a healthy diet really does help you lower

cholesterol. Here the secret is not to eat oatmeal at the same meal as you consumer fatty foods. For instance, it's not a good idea to eat a bowl of oatmeal as a side to your bacon and eggs.



Oatmeal stimulates the liver to make a compound called triacylglycerol. This compound stores fat, If you are eating oatmeal by itself, the liver is stimulated to take cholesterol out of the bloodstream for storage and use where it will be more useful. If you eat oatmeal with your bacon and eggs, the liver will just store the fats released from the digestion of the bacon and eggs.

Another benefit of eating oatmeal is that it seems to lower blood pressure. The effect is not dramatic. The average lowering of blood pressure is just 7 "points" in the systolic, or higher, number, and 10 in the diastolic, or lower. Combining this benefit to your blood pressure with an average 10-20 point reduction in cholesterol, however, oatmeal is a uniquely heart healthy food.

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