



# Plant Stanols / Sterols



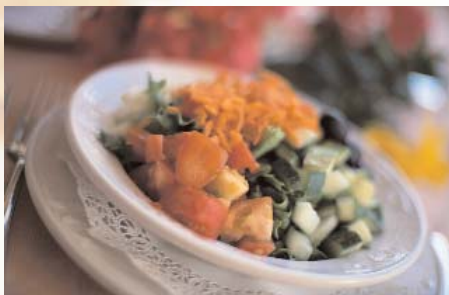
## What are they?

Plant Stanols/Sterols occur naturally in foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, cereals, legumes, olive and peanut oils. It's estimated that people consume about 150-400mg per day of naturally-occurring stanols and sterols, but an average dietary intake at this level has very little effect on cholesterol levels.

Stanols and sterols need to be modified slightly so that they can be incorporated into foods more easily and so work more efficiently in the body. They are made more fat-soluble and so they are usually found added to foods that contain some fat. There is a wide range of products and brands which now have added stanols or sterols, such as Benecol, Flora pro-activ, Danone Danacol & MiniCol. These products include yoghurt drinks, spreads, milk, yoghurts, and cream cheese and hard cheeses.

## How do they work?

They work by reducing cholesterol absorption from the gut. Both stanols and sterols have a similar effect on cholesterol - one is not significantly better than the other. A healthy diet and regular exercise in combination with plant sterols/stanols can reduce total cholesterol and



LDL-cholesterol (the bad type of cholesterol) by 10-20%.

Although they are not an

essential part of managing high cholesterol levels, 2-3g per day is the amount that research has shown to give an effect in people with raised cholesterol levels.

The beneficial effect only impacts if the recommended dose is consumed daily, having more than this recommended amount will not increase the effect. The beneficial effect however is lost when you stop using these products.

## Is it safe to use them with cholesterol-lowering drugs?

Products containing stanols and sterols are not a substitute for lipid-lowering medications prescribed by your doctor. However, people on statins and fibrates drugs to help lower cholesterol levels can use foods containing sterols or stanols as they have a different type of action and may have a greater overall effect on lowering cholesterol levels.

If you do not have a raised cholesterol level, there is no benefit from including these foods in the diet.

## How much do I need?

If you decide to use these foods\*, they should be used in place of similar foods you may currently be using. These products tend to be more expensive compared to ordinary spreads, milk, yoghurts and cheeses.

They can be used in frying and baking. The lower-fat versions of products may be the preferred options in order to keep calorie intake down if weight is of concern.

### Recommendation: EITHER one bottle of drink per day (V)

Product	Package Size	Varieties
Benecol Yoghurt Drink	70g	Plain, Light, Strawberry (V)
Flora pro-activ probiotic yoghurt drink	100g	Original, Strawberry, Orange(V)
Danone Danacol yoghurt drink	100g (1.6g sterols per bottle)	Original, Strawberry(V)

**OR 2-3 servings of the following products each day**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Package size</b>	<b>Varieties</b>	<b>Single Serving Size</b>
Benecol spreads	250g, 500g.	Regular, Olive Oil & Light(V)	12 g (>2 tsp.)
Flora pro-activ low fat spread	250g, 500g.	Light, Olive oil & Extra Light(V)	10 g (2 tsp.)
Flora pro-activ milk	1 litre	semi-skimmed(V)	250 ml (1 glass)
Benecol low fat Bio yoghurts	125g	Apricot, cherry, raspberry, toffee, vanilla, strawberry(V)	125g (1 pot)
Flora pro-activ low fat yoghurt	125g	Strawberry, apricot, Raspberry, cherry	125g (1 pot)
Benecol light cream cheese style spread	200g	Plain, Garlic & Herbs(V)	20g (4 tsp.)
MiniCol Cheddar Cheese	Plain(V)		65g daily

**\*Pregnant and breast feeding woman and children under five have special dietary needs and should talk to their doctor/dietitian before using any product to help manage cholesterol.**

**(V) Vegetarian**

For more information about a heart healthy diet, download the fact sheet 'Eating for a Healthy Heart'.