

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham



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# Stanols and Sterols

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Plant sterols and stanols are naturally occurring substances found in plants. They are present in small quantities in many fruits, vegetables, vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, cereals and grains. Sterols and stanols can be found in specially developed products, such as some spreads and yoghurts. Stanols and sterols have been shown to be most effective when 1.5 grams - 2.4 grams is consumed per day. Stanols and sterols work by blocking the absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine. Whilst they are not an essential part of lipid lowering diet, studies have shown that plant stanol or sterol enriched cholesterol lowering products can lower total and 'bad' LDL cholesterol levels by up to 10% within three weeks.

Eating a heart healthy low fat diet that include eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods, plus regular exercise will help reduce the risk of heart disease.

## Are they safe?

The only small concern about plant sterols is that they may reduce the absorption of certain vitamins such as vitamin E. Therefore they should be used as part of a healthy diet which includes plenty of fruit and vegetables to help maintain normal levels. Apart from this no other side effects have been reported.

## How to use effectively

- Plant sterol/stanol products should be spread out through the day and always taken with meals to optimize impact.
- If the fortified mini-yogurt drink option is chosen (only one serving a day) then this should be taken with a main meal.
- The beneficial effect only impacts if the recommended dose is consumed daily (1.5g-2.4g).

## Recommended servings

| Food Item   | Portion Size                 | Servings needed to meet 2g/day |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Spreads</b>  |                              |                                |
| Flora proactive low fat spreads (light, olive oil, extra light) | 0.75g per 10g serving        | 3                              |
| Benecol® spreads (regular, olive oil, light)                    | 0.8g per 12g serving         | 3                              |
| Asda cholesterol lowering spread                                | 0.73g per 10g spread         | 3                              |
| <b>Yoghurts</b>   |                              |                                |
| Flora proactive   | 0.75g sterols per 125g pot   | 3                              |
| Benecol® low fat bio yoghurt                                    | 0.8g stanols per 125g pot    | 3                              |
| <b>Milk</b>   |                              |                                |
| Flora proactiv  | 0.75g sterols per 250mls     | 3                              |
| <b>Cheese</b>   |                              |                                |
| Minocol   | 65g serving                  | 3                              |
| Benecol® light cream cheese style spread                        | 0.8g stanols per 20g serving | 3                              |
| <b>Mini yoghurt drinks</b>                                      |                              |                                |
| Pro X cholesterol lowering                                      | 2g sterols 100g              | 1                              |
| Asda cholesterol lowering                                       | 2g sterols per 100g          | 1                              |
| Flora proactive health yoghurt drink                            | 2g sterols per 100g          | 1                              |
| Benecol® yoghurt drink (light)                                  | 2g stanols per 67.5g         | 1                              |
| Tesco healthy living cholesterol lowering                       | 2g sterols per 100g          | 1                              |
| <b>Mini smoothie drinks</b>                                     |                              |                                |
| Benecol® fruit and dairy smoothie                               | 2g plant stanol per 65.5g    | 1                              |
| <b>Mini dairy-free drinks</b>                                   |                              |                                |
| Benecol® dairy free mini drink                                  | 2g plant stanol per 65.5g    | 1                              |

## What if I am on cholesterol lowering medications?

Products containing stanols and sterols are not a substitute for lipid lowering medication prescribed by your doctor. However people on statins and Fibrates drugs to help lower cholesterol levels can use foods containing stanols and sterols as they have a different action and may have a greater effect on lowering cholesterol levels. If you choose to commence stanols or sterols let your doctor know that you are taking them.



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit [www.uhb.nhs.uk](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk) or call 0121 627 7803

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**HIV Clinic**  
**Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham**  
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston  
Birmingham, B15 2WB  
Telephone: 0121 204 1700

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