

# CAREZone

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023



## Fall's Bounty

Summer gardens (and farmers' markets!) deliver delicious fresh produce suitable for the day's grill or canning stint – but fall's harvest is where we look for vegetables that are "good keepers."

Root vegetables like beets, parsnips, turnips, and Jerusalem artichokes; hardy cabbages; and winter squash and pumpkins all, under the right conditions will store well. Fall's fruits – apples, pears, pomegranates and cranberries, for example – are also often well suited for storage. Even produce that doesn't boast long storage capacity, like broccoli and cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and fresh greens (kale, collards, mustard and Bok choy, for example) seem hardier than summer produce, as if they're ready to nourish us heartily as the cool winds start stirring the leaves.

When gathering fall produce from the garden or market, set aside your best, unblemished specimens for storage and serve up (or freeze, pickle or can) the rest as soon as possible. In general, turnips, beets, and other root crops and cabbages will keep best in a moist, cold, but not freezing (35 to 40 degrees) environment. Sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and winter squash prefer a dry, warm (not hot), area – about 50 to 60 degrees. (An unheated basement might be perfect.) For maximum storage time and minimum vitamin depletion, most produce is best stored in a dark place.

To compliment your fall harvest, you'll want to stock up on your favorite spices – and perhaps find a few new ones. Warming spices are especially appropriate for the change in temperature (allspice, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, mace, nutmeg), but any spice can find a good harvest partner.

## National Cholesterol Education Month

### What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and many foods. Your body needs cholesterol to function normally and makes all that you need. However, too much cholesterol can build up in your arteries. After a while, these deposits narrow your arteries, putting you at risk for heart disease and stroke.

### How do you know if your cholesterol is high?

High cholesterol usually doesn't have any symptoms. As a result, many people do not know that their cholesterol levels are too high. However, doctors can do a simple blood test to check your cholesterol. High cholesterol can be controlled through lifestyle changes or if it is not enough, through medications.

It's important to check your cholesterol levels. High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

A simple blood test called a lipoprotein profile can measure your total cholesterol levels, including LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or "bad" cholesterol), HDL (high-density lipoprotein, or "good" cholesterol), and triglycerides.

The following chart shows optimal lipid levels for adults:

#### Desirable Cholesterol Levels

<b>Total cholesterol</b>	Less than 200 mg/dL
<b>Low LDL ("bad") cholesterol</b>	Less than 100 mg/dL
<b>High HDL ("good") cholesterol</b>	40 mg/dL or higher
<b>Triglycerides</b>	Less than 150 mg/dL

### If you have high cholesterol, what can you do to lower it?

Your doctor may prescribe medications to treat your high cholesterol. In addition, you can lower your cholesterol levels through lifestyle changes:

- Low-fat and high-fiber food (more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole grains).
- For adults, getting at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate or 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity a week. For those aged 6-17, getting 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Don't smoke or quit if you do smoke.

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## Breast Cancer Awareness

Lifestyle changes have been shown in studies to decrease breast cancer risk even in high-risk women. The following are steps you can take to lower your risk:

-  **Limit alcohol.** The more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk of developing breast cancer. The general recommendation — based on research on the effect of alcohol on breast cancer risk — is to limit yourself to less than 1 drink per day as even small amounts increase risk.
-  **Don't smoke.** Accumulating evidence suggests a link between smoking and breast cancer risk, particularly in premenopausal women. In addition, not smoking is one of the best things you can do for your overall health.
-  **Control your weight.** Being overweight or obese increases the risk of breast cancer. This is especially true if obesity occurs later in life, particularly after menopause.
-  **Be physically active.** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight, which, in turn, helps prevent breast cancer. For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity weekly, plus strength training at least twice a week.
-  **Breast-feed.** Breast-feeding might play a role in breast cancer prevention. The longer you breast-feed, the greater the protective effect.
-  **Limit dose and duration of hormone therapy.** Combination hormone therapy for more than three to five years increases the risk of breast cancer. If you're taking hormone therapy for menopausal symptoms, ask your doctor about other options. You might be able to manage your symptoms with non-hormonal therapies and medications. If you decide that the benefits of short-term hormone therapy outweigh the risks, use the lowest dose that works for you and continue to have your doctor monitor the length of time you are taking hormones.
-  **Avoid exposure to radiation and environmental pollution.** Medical-imaging methods, such as computerized tomography, use high doses of radiation. While more studies are needed, some research suggests a link between breast cancer and radiation exposure. Reduce your exposure by having such tests only when absolutely necessary.
-  **Be vigilant about breast cancer detection.** If you notice any changes in your breasts, such as a new lump or skin changes, consult your doctor. Also, ask your doctor when to begin mammograms and other screenings based on personal history.

