

Cholesterol-Lowering Margarines

Stanol and Sterol Esters

What are Stanol and Sterol Esters?

They are natural substances derived from plants that may reduce your blood cholesterol levels. These supplements should not be used in place of a heart-healthy diet or cholesterol-lowering medication, but can provide an additional beneficial reduction in LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels. Your doctor may recommend regular use of stanol or sterol esters instead of prescribing or increasing the dose of a cholesterol-lowering medicine

How do the stanol and sterol esters work?

These supplements are derived from plants like corn and beans. They reduce blood cholesterol by interfering with absorption of dietary cholesterol from the small intestine. The supplements themselves are usually not absorbed into the body, and therefore, side effects from or reactions to them are very uncommon. Two - three servings (one tablespoon equals one serving) of margarines containing these supplements provide a total of 3.4 – 5.1 grams of stanol or sterol ester. Used daily, this dose can reduce total cholesterol and LDL-cholesterol levels by 10% or more. These supplements do not affect triglyceride or HDL cholesterol levels.

How are stanol or sterol esters packaged?

These supplements are currently packaged in special margarines – Benecol contains stanol ester and Take Control contains sterol ester. Benecol and Take Control come in regular or light versions, which both contain the same amount of stanol or sterol ester. The calorie and fat content is described in the table below. Both Benecol and Take Control are low in saturated fat and trans fat, and neither contains cholesterol.

What is the difference between Benecol and Take Control?

Research has shown that the sterol esters in Take Control and the stanol esters in Benecol have similar cholesterol-lowering effects.

A very small number of people suffer from a condition where their body absorbs too much sterol from their intestine, including the sterol ester in Take Control. People with this condition should not use Take Control, but because the condition is so rare, either Take Control or Benecol can be safely and effectively be used by most people.

How do I use Benecol and Take Control?

These margarines can be used in the same way other margarines are used. Like other light margarines, Benecol Light or Take Control Light do not work well for cooking or baking because of the higher water content. However, if you choose to cook with any of these margarines, heating will not destroy the active ingredient.

Can these margarines lead to weight gain?

The stanol or sterol ester in these products does not eliminate the fat and calories in the margarine. If these margarines are substituted for another margarine with the same calorie content, you should not experience weight gain. However, if you add the recommended servings of Benecol or Take Control to your usual diet without taking away other sources of calories, you may gain weight. You could gain up to two pounds per month using the regular versions of these margarines or one pound per month using the light versions at the recommended doses. You can prevent this weight gain by substituting Benecol or Take Control for other fats or eating slightly smaller servings of other foods. Increasing your activity level can also help prevent weight gain.

How much do Benecol and Take Control cost?

Benecol and Take Control are more expensive than other margarines because of the active ingredient that they contain. However, these margarines are usually less expensive than the cost of a higher dose of a cholesterol-lowering medicine and they have fewer potential side

effects. An eight-ounce container of Benecol costs between \$4.25 and \$4.50, while Take Control costs between \$2.50 and \$3.00. Each container has 16 servings, so the approximate weekly cost to use three servings per day of Benecol would be \$5.50 –6.00, and for Take Control about \$3.50-4.00.

	Take Control, Regular 1 Tbsp	Take Control, Light 1 Tbsp	Benecol, Regular 1 Tbsp	Benecol, Light 1 Tbsp
Calories	80	45	80	45
Total Fat, gm	8	5	9	5
Saturated Fat, gm	1	0.5	1	0.5
Trans fatty acids, gm	0	0	<0.5	<0.5
Monounsaturated Fat, gm	4.5	2	4	2.5
Polyunsaturated Fat, gm	2	2	3	2
Cholesterol, mg	0	0	0	0
Sodium, mg	85	85	110	110
Active Ingredients	1.7 gm sterol ester (1 gm sterol)	1.7 gm sterol ester (1 gm sterol)	1.7 gm stanol ester (1 gm stanol)	1.7 gm stanol ester (1 gm stanol)

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® Take Control is a registered trademark of Unilever Best Foods