Information for patients

First line advice:
For Patients with High Cholesterol

This information sheet has been provided to give you basic initial information about what to do if you have raised cholesterol levels. Raised blood cholesterol is linked with atherosclerosis (narrowing or blocking of blood vessels) which increases risk of conditions such as heart attacks and stroke. This information sheet is only intended for use until you can see a dietitian who will help plan your personal diet. Ensure your GP has booked you an appointment with a dietitian at the time you receive this sheet.

What is Cholesterol?
Cholesterol is a fatty substance which is found in the blood. Cholesterol plays an important role in essential body cell functions. However, having too much increases your risk of heart disease.

There are two main types:

LDL – This can build up in artery walls leading to narrowing and blockage and can cause heart disease. We should aim to keep this low.

HDL – This helps to clear cholesterol from the body and is protective against heart disease. We should try to increase this level if it is low.

Cardio Protective Diet	
Reduce your saturated fat	Saturated fats come from animal sources such as butter, lard, ghee, hard cheese, and fatty meats and meat products. They are also used in the manufacture of cakes and biscuits. Coconut oil and palm oil are also high in saturated fats.
Choose unsaturated fats	Monounsaturated fats come from olive and rapeseed oil, avocado, nuts (macadamia, almond, cashew, peanuts, brazil, chestnuts) and seeds, olive oil spreads and some margarine. Try to use this kind of fat in cooking.

Polyunsaturated fats come from corn, sunflower, and soya oil, nuts (walnuts, pine nuts) and seeds, and some margarine. |
Include sources of Omega-3	Aim to have one portion of oily fish per week. This could include salmon, herring, trout, mackerel, fresh tuna, pilchards, sardines.
Avoid trans fats	These are altered forms of Poly- and Mono-unsaturated fats. They appear on labels as 'hydrogenated Vegetable oils' and are usually found in cakes, biscuits, chocolate, pastry, sauces, oils use repeatedly for deep frying, and shortenings.
Include high fibre foods, especially soluble fibre	Soluble fibre comes from oats, pulses e.g. beans, lentils, chickpeas, and fruits and vegetables. They can help to lower cholesterol when consumed daily.

Get your 5 a day (fruit and vegetables)	These are a good source of antioxidants. Aim to take a variety of fruit and vegetables on a daily basis. A portion is a handful or 80g. They can be fresh, dried or tinned. Juice can count as one portion.
Increase your activity and control your weight	Aim for regular exercise on a daily basis and consider losing weight if you are overweight.
	Other important information for a healthy heart
Reduce salt intake	Avoid sprinkling salt on your meals and reduce salt added in cooking. Choose fresh foods where possible as processed foods usually have a high salt content. Experiment with flavouring foods using herbs and spices, vinegars or lemon juice instead of salt and stock cubes.
Take alcohol in moderation	Men should limit their intake to 3-4 units a day and women 2-3 units a day, with 2 alcohol free days per week. 1 unit of alcohol is half-pint beer, a small glass (125mls) of wine, or single pub measure of spirits.
Reduce your sugar intake	Avoid sugary foods and do not add sugar or honey to food or drinks.

This information leaflet was produced by the Community Dietitians at The North West London Hospitals NHS Trust, Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Rd, Harrow, HA1 3UJ