




Cholesterol & Menopause

Cholesterol-lowering
through diet and lifestyle



A close-up photograph of a person's hand, showing the skin texture and a red object (possibly a piece of fruit or a tool) partially visible on the left side. The hand is positioned vertically, with the fingers slightly curled.

CONSIDERING CHOLESTEROL DURING AND AFTER THE MENOPAUSE

Menopause is a natural stage in a woman's life when the level of sex hormones, mainly oestrogen, in the body fall. Lower oestrogen levels, that occur during and after the menopause, can negatively affect cholesterol levels. When you have too much cholesterol in your blood, it builds up in your blood vessels which can result in coronary heart disease. As the protective effect of oestrogen on the heart and circulatory system is lost during the menopause, the risk of coronary heart disease increases. The good news is there are some simple steps you can take to help achieve healthy cholesterol levels, and it starts with diet and lifestyle.



WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your blood that is mostly produced in the liver, but it's also obtained via foods such as red meat, cheese, butter and eggs. Cholesterol is essential for your body to function normally, but too much can be harmful.



WHY SHOULD WOMEN CONSIDER THEIR CHOLESTEROL ESPECIALLY DURING AND AFTER MENOPAUSE?

When there is too much cholesterol in your blood, it leads to plaque buildup on the walls of your arteries. This condition, known as atherosclerosis, may cause blockages in the arteries of the heart and/or brain, leading to health problems as a result of coronary heart disease, such as heart attack or stroke.

Menopause is a natural stage in a woman's life when the level of sex hormones, mainly oestrogen, in the body fall. The protective effect of oestrogen on the heart and circulatory system is lost during the menopause, making heart health one of the biggest health issues for menopausal women. For example, because of the change in hormones, blood cholesterol levels can rise. The rise in cholesterol means women have a higher risk of heart attacks and other disease of the heart and blood vessels after menopause than before, so it's important to get blood fats and any other health problems under control. Unfortunately, these effects can go unnoticed as their impact is not necessarily felt immediately and if left untreated, could impact long-term health.

With menopause, women not only experience a worsening of their lipid profile, but also have an increased tendency to gain weight particularly around their middle, and blood pressure can increase. Despite some improvement in recent years, underdiagnosis and undertreatment in women is still an issue.



Plant stanol ester has been shown to lower cholesterol. High cholesterol is a risk factor in the development of coronary heart disease. A daily intake of 1.5-2.4g plant stanols has been shown to lower cholesterol by 7-10% in 2-3 weeks. Individual results may vary.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL

The first step to finding out whether you have high cholesterol is to have your blood checked. This simple test can be carried out by your healthcare professional and will give you a cholesterol level. And if you know your level, you can do something about it.

Your total cholesterol level includes different types of cholesterol which have different effects in the body. There are two main types:

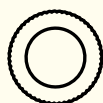


LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is often known as the ‘bad’ type of cholesterol. If there is too much LDL cholesterol in the blood, it can slowly build in the arteries, making them narrower which increases the risk of coronary heart diseases.



HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is commonly referred to as “good cholesterol” as it is carried away from the peripheral tissues, including arteries, back to the liver for recycling or removal from the body.

A quick tip to remember the difference is that your **LDL** should be **Lower** and your **HDL** should be **Higher**.^{*} You may also get some additional blood measurements if you get tested.



Non-HDL cholesterol refers to all of the ‘bad’ types of cholesterol, including but not limited to LDL. The non-HDL measurement also includes VLDL (very-low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol though usually only present in small amounts but may be elevated in those living with type 2 diabetes.



Triglycerides are not the same as cholesterol but are a type of fat found in your blood and often measured at the same time.

LDL-cholesterol and non-HDL cholesterol are the focus of cholesterol lowering. As a guide, healthy adults should aim for results that fall within the limits below:

Total cholesterol	≤ 5.0 mmol/l
LDL cholesterol	≤ 3.0 mmol/l
HDL cholesterol	≥ 1.0 mmol/l
Non-HDL cholesterol	≤ 4.0 mmol/l
Triglycerides	≤ 2.3 mmol/l

Cholesterol should not be considered on its own but alongside other risk factors. Healthcare professionals may recommend a different target based on overall risk of cardiovascular disease (using a risk assessment tool) which includes other risk factors or health conditions.



WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE MY CHOLESTEROL?

Your healthcare professional will interpret your test results along with other risk factors, such as age, family history, smoking and advise you how to proceed. For most people, it starts with diet and lifestyle. It might be that some simple changes in your routine could help you achieve great results.

In this brochure we focus on food that promotes healthy cholesterol levels. Simple steps such as improving the quality of fats that you eat, taking in more fibre, or including Benecol® products with added plant stanols as part of a healthy diet could start lowering your cholesterol level. Even small daily changes can yield significant results over time.

CHOLESTEROL LOWERING WITH BENECOL® PRODUCTS

Benecol® products with added plant stanol ester have been shown to lower cholesterol. Elevated cholesterol is a risk factor for coronary heart disease.

How can Benecol help to lower my cholesterol?

Benecol products contain plant stanol ester, which is shown to lower your blood cholesterol levels. Plant stanol ester works by partly blocking cholesterol absorption in the digestive tract.

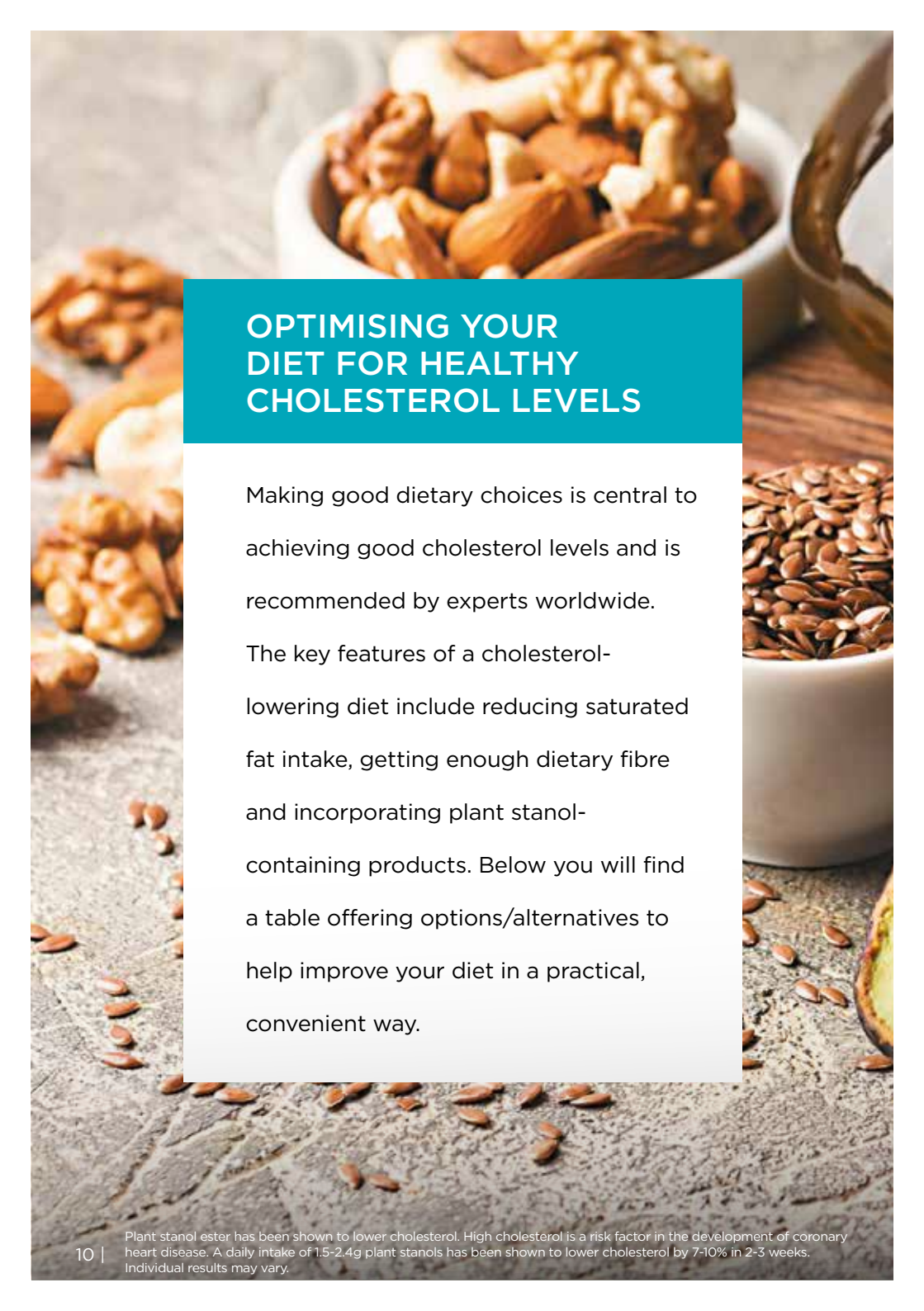
The tasty products in the Benecol range contain plant stanol ester and are shown to lower your LDL cholesterol in **2–3 weeks***. What's more, the daily usage of Benecol as part of your meals also keeps your cholesterol at a lower level in the long term.

Benecol products are designed to be part of a balanced and varied diet and a healthy lifestyle. The cholesterol-lowering effect is at its best when Benecol products are consumed as part of a meal.

The use of Benecol products adds to the effectiveness of lowering cholesterol even when using statin medication. Discuss the use of Benecol products with your doctor if you are on cholesterol-lowering medication.

Only Benecol products contain plant stanol ester.





















OPTIMISING YOUR DIET FOR HEALTHY CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Making good dietary choices is central to achieving good cholesterol levels and is recommended by experts worldwide.






The key features of a cholesterol-lowering diet include reducing saturated fat intake, getting enough dietary fibre and incorporating plant stanol-containing products. Below you will find a table offering options/alternatives to help improve your diet in a practical, convenient way.

		HEALTHIEST CHOICES	EAT OCCASIONALLY	BEST TO LIMIT
FRUIT & VEGETABLES	 FRUIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh, frozen or dried fruit and fruit canned in natural juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned fruit in syrup (drain the syrup) 100% fruit juice Fruit smoothie (no added sugar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit cooked in butter and sugar Fruit fritters Fruit coated in chocolate or candied fruit
	 VEG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homemade vegetable based soups Fresh and frozen vegetables steamed or lightly boiled 100% vegetable juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned vegetables containing added salt/sugar (rinse and drain) Fried vegetables Honey roasted vegetables like parsnips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battered, deep fried vegetables (e.g. onion rings) Buttered vegetables Pakoras and samosas
	 SALADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rainbow salads with a good variety of vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced fat coleslaw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coleslaw Salads with heavy mayonnaise dressing
CARBOHYDRATES	 POTATOES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potatoes, sweet potatoes yam and plantain – boiled, baked, mashed (no fat) or dry roasted Leave the skins on for extra fibre! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thick cut, reduced-fat oven chips Roast potatoes cooked in small amounts of vegetable oil such as sunflower, rapeseed or olive oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roast potatoes cooked in dripping or large amounts of oil Potatoes mashed with butter/cream Deep fried thin cut chips
	 BREAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread, bagels, rolls, pitta, tortillas, chapattis – choose wholemeal versions where possible Wholegrain breakfast cereals, muesli (no added sugar), oats/porridge (with skimmed milk or semi-skimmed milk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naan bread Non-wholemeal options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garlic bread, croissants, waffles Breads spread thickly with butter or made with ghee (e.g. parathas) Sugar coated breakfast cereals
	 PASTA/RICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boiled pasta, rice noodles – choose wholemeal versions where possible Wild rice, pearl barley, quinoa, lentils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-wholemeal options Filled pasta like ravioli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasta or rice served in creamy/buttery sauces Fried rice Cheesey sauces Instant noodles containing lots of salt, fat or sugar
PROTEIN	 MEAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean cuts of meat (pork, ham, lamb, beef, venison, veal, rabbit) and remove any visible fat Extra lean minced meat Grilled or roasted meat without using fat, or casserole with vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean bacon Low fat sausages Limit red meat intake to no more than 70 g on average per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatty cuts of meat – belly pork, duck, goose; fat from edge of meat Processed meats like streaky bacon, frankfurters, sausages, sausage rolls, salami, parma ham Meat pies
	 POULTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken and turkey without skin – grilled or roasted without fat, casserole with vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken breast in breadcrumbs Pan-fried chicken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poultry with skin Kievs Deep fried chicken Processed chicken nuggets

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		HEALTHIEST CHOICES	EAT OCCASIONALLY	BEST TO LIMIT
PROTEIN	 FISH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White fish (e.g. cod, plaice, sole) and oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, herring, fresh tuna) – grilled, baked, steamed, poached or fried in a tiny amount of oil Canned fish in water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned fish in oil (drain oil) Fish fingers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep fried fish in batter/breadcrumbs Fish in buttery or rich sauces (e.g. Hollandaise, lobster sauce)
	 EGGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eggs – boiled, scrambled or poached without fat; scrambled eggs with skimmed/semi-skimmed milk Eating three to four eggs a week should be fine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fried eggs and omelettes cooked in minimal vegetable oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiche Scotch eggs Egg mayonnaise
	 BEANS, PEAS, LENTILS AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lentils, beans, peas, chickpeas, kidney beans (rinse if canned in salt/sugar) Reduced sugar/salt varieties of baked beans Soya mince, soya beans, tofu Quorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced fat hummus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep fried falafel
	 NUTS AND SEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuts and seeds – especially almonds, walnuts, linseed (flaxseed), pumpkin, sesame, sunflower seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nut butters (choose varieties lower in sugar and salt) Reduced fat coconut milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coconut, coconut cream, coconut milk Roasted nuts in oil and salt, chocolate coated nuts Nut and seed butters with hydrogenated fat
DRINKS	 DRINKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tap, mineral, soda water Small portions of fruit juice (no added sugar) Tea/coffee with low fat milk Low fat milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugar free squash Diet fizzy drinks Sugar free hot chocolate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fizzy drinks with added sugar Drinks made with whole milk and cream Milkshakes Hot chocolate
FLAVOURINGS	 FLAVOURINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice, garlic, etc. Pickles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced salt soya sauce Reduced salt flavouring (e.g. reduced salt stock, ketchup) Small amount of chilli sauce or low sugar/salt tomato ketchup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sal, soy sauce
DAIRY & ALTERNATIVES	 MILK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skimmed, 1% fat or semi-skimmed milk Soya drinks 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full fat milk Flavoured milk with added sugar Malted milk
	 CHEESE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower fat cheese e.g. cottage, quark, ricotta, fromage frais and 'extra light' soft cheese spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium fat cheese e.g. half fat cheddar, 'reduced fat' cheese, paneer, 'light' soft cheese spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High fat cheese e.g. cheddar, mascarpone, Red Leicester, Stilton, Gruyere, Parmesan Soft cheeses such as Brie, Camembert and cream cheese Fried paneer

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		HEALTHIEST CHOICES	EAT OCCASIONALLY	BEST TO LIMIT
DAIRY & ALTERNATIVES	 <p>YOGURTS AND CREAM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat and low-sugar yogurts • Yogurts and yogurt drinks with plant stanols*/sterols (for people with high cholesterol) • Dairy alternatives e.g. soya yogurts • Low fat Greek yogurt • Unsweetened kefir 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower fat cream products • Half fat crème fraîche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creamy yogurts; Greek yogurt, coconut yogurt • Clotted, double, whipping, soured, single cream • Crème fraîche
	 <p>FATS, SPREADS AND OILS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower, unsaturated fat spreads • Spreads with plant stanols*/sterols (for people with high cholesterol) • Unsaturated vegetable oils e.g. olive, sunflower, rapeseed, (most vegetable oil is made from rapeseed oil), soya, corn – use as little as possible (measure, don't pour) or use a spray oil 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, lard, suet, dripping, ghee, hard margarines, spreads with hydrogenated fat (check the label) • Palm oil, coconut oil • Oils which have been reheated several times
FATTY AND SUGARY FOODS	 <p>SALAD DRESSINGS AND GRAVIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fat salad dressings • Gravies and sauces thickened with flour • Tomato/vegetable-based sauces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower fat salad creams and mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salad creams, mayonnaise • Sauces made with butter or cream • Gravies made with fat from cooking meat/poultry
	 <p>BISCUITS, CAKES, CONFECTIONARY, PASTRIES AND DESSERTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit salads, sorbet • Sugar-free jelly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain biscuits (e.g. rich tea, malted milk biscuits), tea cakes, crumpets, malt bread; fruit buns • Fruit-based puddings • Frozen yogurt • Meringue (without cream) • Jam; fruit preserves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cakes, biscuits, pastries, pies, doughnuts, cheesecake • Chocolate, fudge, toffees • Dairy ice cream or ice cream made with cream
	 <p>SAVOURY SNACKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal breadsticks • Plain popcorn • Tomato-based sauces and dips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced fat crisps • Reduced fat hummus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisps • Cheese snacks • Bombay mix

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You can stay on top of your cholesterol and keep a balance while still enjoying life. Making switches is a simple way to do this without having to make big changes to your diet or lifestyle.



Try new things in your everyday diet. Can you introduce more cholesterol-lowering foods? Eating Benecol foods with plant stanols as part of a healthy diet can lower LDL cholesterol more than healthy eating alone.



Get to know which foods are high in saturated fat – and choose them less often. Saturated fat is found in high-fat dairy foods (such as cream, whole milk, hard cheese, butter), in fatty cuts of meat and in cakes and pastries. Eating these foods a little less often, and making switches – like swapping out butter for a Benecol spread – are changes you can make that will add up.

Quick guide: **the average man** aged 19–64 years should eat no more than 30 g of saturated fat a day

the average woman aged 19–64 years should eat no more than 20 g of saturated fat a day

Get wise to hidden saturated fats. Saturated fats may also be ‘hidden’ in some convenience foods, so by checking nutrition labels on food packaging you can choose products that are lower in saturated fat. Small changes like this can all help you limit your saturated fat intake.



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Switch to unsaturated ('good') fat. Unsaturated fat is better for your heart health and is found in a wide range of tasty and versatile foods. These include nuts, seeds and vegetable oils (e.g. olive, rapeseed, sunflower) and spreads made from these. This means you can keep your heart happy with a variety of ingredients to choose from.

Choose healthier cooking methods. Grilling, steaming, boiling and baking use less fat than frying, so you can cook up a storm with some of your favourite foods while cutting back on saturated fats. You can also cook and bake with some Benecol spreads rather than butter.



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Eat more fruit and vegetables. Aim to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. This will provide you with fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals, while also keeping your plate varied and colourful. Some fruit and veg also contain soluble fibre which can help lower cholesterol.

Go for fibre. Eating plenty of fibre is good for your heart, and some high-fibre foods can help lower cholesterol. Opt for 30 g of fibre a day, starting with wholemeal/wholegrain/whole wheat varieties of bread, rice and pasta whenever possible. Foods that contain soluble fibre are especially good for cholesterol – these include oats, beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas.

Stay physically active. Exercise is known for being one of the most important factors in maintaining a good quality of life, helping to maintain our overall health and wellbeing. Regular exercise helps boost ‘good’ cholesterol while reducing LDL (bad cholesterol) and can also lower blood pressure.



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MY PERSONAL PLAN: CHOLESTEROL-LOWERING DIETARY COMMITMENTS

Improving the quality of my diet.

My practical steps:

Reducing bad habits.

My practical steps:

Other planned lifestyle changes/additional information:

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For more information and advice, visit Benecol® online.

UK: www.Benecol.co.uk

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HEART UK Charity Registration No: 1003904

For further information please visit: www.heartuk.org.uk