



Your Healthy Cholesterol Guide

Learn About & Manage Cholesterol Levels



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Life is Why



We all have a reason to live a longer, healthier life. More time with family, more adventures, more memories. The American Heart Association (AHA) wants to help you be your healthiest so you can have more of **life's precious moments.**



High cholesterol can increase your overall risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke, but it usually has no symptoms. That's why it's import to talk to your doctor about risk factors and **know your numbers.**



The good news is, if you have high cholesterol, it can often be controlled with **healthy lifestyle choices.**

This guide is made possible by:



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The only way to get to know your cholesterol levels is through a simple blood test.

Your medical provider can measure blood cholesterol and you should track cholesterol levels with a personal at-home chart.



How often should you get checked?

The AHA recommends that all adults age 20 or older have their cholesterol and other traditional risk factors checked every four to six years. People who have cardiovascular disease or are at higher risk of it may need their cholesterol and other risk factors assessed more often.



How is the test done?

Your doctor will tell you if you should fast before your test. In the test, a small sample of blood will be taken from your arm or finger and then analyzed in a laboratory. The levels of HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol and triglycerides are measured and reported.



How will I know if I'm at risk?

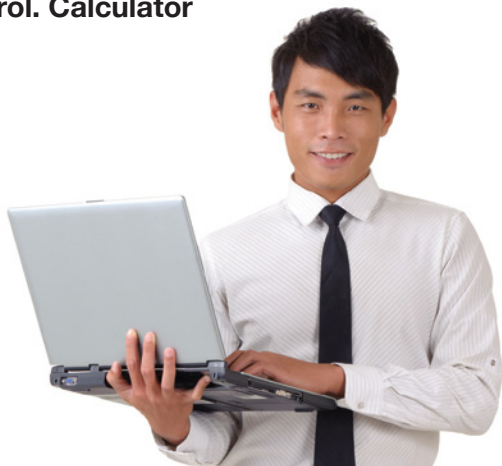
To determine how your cholesterol levels affect your risk of heart disease, your doctor will also consider other risk factors, which may include age, sex, family history, smoking, diabetes and high blood pressure.



Know Your Numbers



Find out your own risk for a heart or stroke event.
Visit heart.org/cholesterol for the **Check. Change. Control. Calculator**





Cholesterol is a waxy substance that your body needs to build cells. But too much can be a problem. Together with other substances, cholesterol can form a thick, hard deposit that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, a heart attack or stroke can result.



What are LDL and HDL?

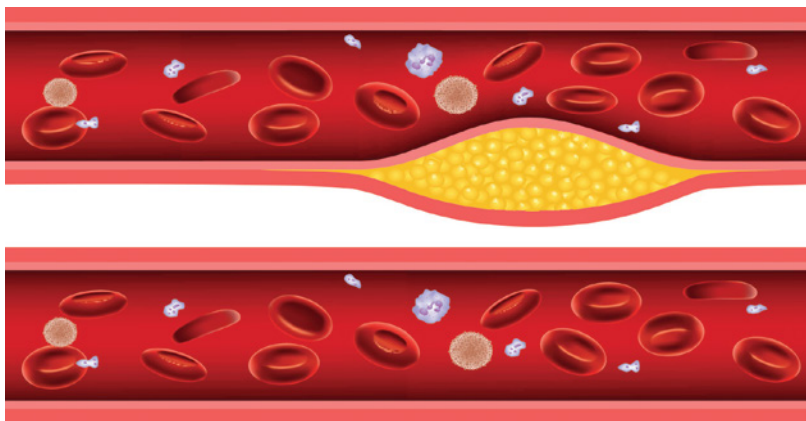
Cholesterol travels through the body via lipoproteins, LDL and HDL. High-density lipoprotein is known as “good” cholesterol. Low-density lipoprotein is known as “bad” cholesterol. HDL helps keep LDL from sticking to artery walls and reduces plaque build-up. This process can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke.



What is total cholesterol?

$\text{HDL} + \text{LDL} + 20\% \text{ of triglyceride level} = \text{total cholesterol level}$. Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in the body.

Understand Cholesterol



Is there an ideal cholesterol level?

For many years, doctors used ranges to evaluate HDL and LDL cholesterol levels. Today doctors think about risk in broader terms. They evaluate blood cholesterol levels in context with other risk factors. Current American Heart Association guidelines recommend this more integrated approach. When you have your cholesterol checked, talk to your doctor about how cholesterol levels and other risk factors impact your overall cardiovascular risk.

When you control your cholesterol, you are giving your arteries the best chance to remain clear of blockages and avoid a heart attack or stroke. Lifestyle changes may be part of the action plan from your doctor to control cholesterol or you may be prescribed medication. Here are some tips for success.



Eat better.

Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish and nuts. Limit sugary foods and drinks, fatty or processed meats, and salt.



Get active.

Physical activity not only helps control cholesterol but also weight, blood pressure and stress levels.



Know your fats.

The fats you eat can affect your cholesterol levels. Replace saturated and trans fats with healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.



Take medication.

The best way to reach treatment goals and enjoy the benefits of better health is to follow a medical provider's advice.



Tips to Take Control



Quit smoking.

If an individual smokes, high cholesterol is another good reason to quit. And everyone should avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.



Lose excess weight.

Being overweight or obese tends to raise LDL cholesterol and lower HDL.



Reduce saturated fat in meat and poultry.

Select lean cuts of meat with minimal visible fat. Broil rather than pan-fry meats. Remove the skin from chicken or turkey before cooking. Limit processed meats such as sausage, salami and hot dogs.



Eat more fish.

Choose oily fish such as salmon, trout and herring, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Bake, broil or grill rather than frying. Shrimp and crawfish have more cholesterol than most other types of seafood, but they're lower in total fat and saturated fat than most meats and poultry.



Eat less meat.

Try meatless meals featuring vegetables or beans.



Cook fresh vegetables the heart-healthy way.

Limit oils and add herbs and spices instead of salt to make vegetables even tastier.



Use liquid vegetable oils in place of solid fats.

Canola, safflower, sunflower, soybean or olive oils can often be used instead of solid fats such as butter, lard or shortening. If you use margarine, try the soft or liquid kind.

Cooking for Cardio



Puree fruits and veggies for baking.

You can replace the oil in many recipes with pureed fruits or veggies for an extra healthy boost.



Lower dairy fats.

Opt for low-fat or fat-free dairy.



Sauces and gravies.

Let your cooking liquid cool, then remove the hardened fat before making gravy. Or use a fat separator.



Increase fiber and whole grains.

Use whole-grain bread to make breadcrumbs or croutons. Serve whole fruit at breakfast instead of juice. Use brown rice or whole grain pasta. Add lots of colorful veggies to your salad.



