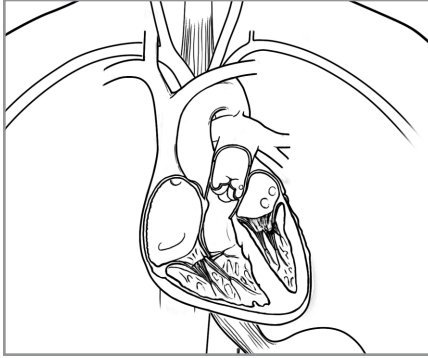


# Cholesterol

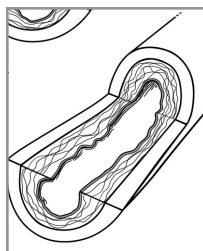


**Cholesterol is a soft, waxy, fatty substance that comes from two sources: your body (it's made in your liver), and the food you eat.** When you have too much cholesterol, it can be harmful to your body.

High cholesterol doesn't have any symptoms, so you won't know you have it until you get tested. Talk to your doctor about having your cholesterol tested.



Plaque forms



Arteries narrow

## Types of Cholesterol

Cholesterol and other fats can't dissolve in your blood. Carriers, called lipoproteins, transport them to and from cells.

**Two lipoproteins that carry cholesterol are:**

**HIGH-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN, OR HDL**, carries the "good" cholesterol. It moves cholesterol away from the arteries. This reduces your risk of heart disease.

**LOW-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN, OR LDL**, carries the "bad" cholesterol. If you have too much LDL, it can build up on the artery wall and harden to form plaque. As plaque builds, it narrows and may clog your arteries. This condition is known as atherosclerosis, and it increases your risk of heart disease.

Another type of fat, called triglycerides, is also a factor in your total cholesterol level. Triglycerides are a type of fat that comes from food. When you eat, your body turns calories into energy. Calories that you don't use are changed into triglycerides and stored as fat. High triglycerides increase your risk of heart disease. They may also cause damage to the lining of your arteries.

## Your Cholesterol Numbers

### Total Cholesterol Guidelines

less than 200 mg/dL	200–239 mg/dL	240 mg/dL or higher
Desirable	Borderline high	High

### HDL Cholesterol Guidelines

60 mg/dL or higher	40–59 mg/dL	40 mg/dL or lower
Optimal	Acceptable	Increased risk

### LDL Cholesterol Guidelines

less than 100 mg/dL	100–129 mg/dL	130–159 mg/dL	160–189 mg/dL	190 mg/dL or higher
Optimal	Near/above optimal	Borderline high	High	Very high

*Note: If you have diabetes, heart disease, or you're at risk for a heart attack or stroke, your LDL goal may be different. Your doctor can help you determine your individual LDL goal.*

### Triglycerides Guidelines

less than 150 mg/dL	150–199 mg/dL	200–499 mg/dL	500 mg/dL or higher
Normal	Borderline high	High	Very high

## Medicine for High Cholesterol

Cholesterol medicines can help lower LDL cholesterol; raise HDL cholesterol; prevent new plaque from forming; and help repair damaged arteries. Your doctor will help you determine which medicine is best for you. It's important to always take your medicine exactly as your doctor prescribes.

### *For more information, contact:*

- **American Academy of Family Physicians**  
Website:  
[www.familydoctor.org/online/famdoces/home.html](http://www.familydoctor.org/online/famdoces/home.html)
- **American Heart Association**  
Website:  
[www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3015971](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3015971)  
Phone: 1-800-242-8721

Healthy Advice *physicians may reproduce this handout for patient use.*

## How You Can Lower Your Cholesterol

Making changes in your lifestyle is the first step toward treating high cholesterol. Your doctor can help you make a plan, and stick to it. You may need to:

- **Lose weight**—If you're overweight, talk to your doctor about a weight-loss plan.
- **Exercise**—Regular exercise will help prevent high “bad” cholesterol and can raise “good” cholesterol. It can also help you get your weight under control, putting less strain on your heart.
- **Control your diabetes**—The American Diabetes Association recommends that you keep your A1C below 7 percent.
- **Lower high blood pressure**—If your blood pressure is high, lifestyle changes or medication can help you lower it.
- **Limit alcohol**—Moderate amounts of alcohol may help raise your HDL; but for your overall health, it's best to limit your daily alcohol intake to one drink for women and two drinks for men.
- **Quit smoking**—Make a plan with your doctor to quit, and stick to it.
- **Add heart healthy foods to your diet.** For example:
  - Choose lean meats and poultry, and eat fish at least twice a week.
  - Buy low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
  - Eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
  - Add fiber to your diet.

### Remember:

- Know your numbers, and talk with your doctor about how often to have your cholesterol checked.
- Take all medicines as prescribed.
- Keep all scheduled appointments with your doctor.
- Monitor your diet, eat heart-healthy foods, exercise and quit smoking.