

Cholesterol Basics



Cholesterol comes from your liver and from foods containing animal fat. Foods high in cholesterol are meat, fish, egg yolks and full-fat dairy products. Cholesterol accumulation in the blood can lead to plaque formation, which can build up and block vessels.

HIGH CHOLESTEROL CAN:

- Lead to heart disease
- Result in blood clots that can cause a stroke or heart attack
- Cause plaque buildup in the legs (peripheral arterial disease)
- Hardening of arteries (atherosclerosis)

LDL is “bad” cholesterol, because it causes plaque buildup. HDL is “good” cholesterol, because it helps remove LDL from your arteries. If you don’t have enough HDL, you are at risk of heart disease. Triglycerides are a type of fat stored from excessive calories eaten. High levels of triglycerides are linked with hardened arteries. High triglycerides may be caused by being overweight, a lack of routine exercise, smoking, excess alcohol use and high-carbohydrate diets (more than 60 percent of total calories). Genetic disorders are often a cause, too. Increased cholesterol has no symptoms, and many people are unaware that their cholesterol levels are putting them at risk for cardiovascular disease.

	Total Cholesterol	High Cholesterol	LDL Cholesterol	Triglycerides
Good	Less than 200	Ideal is 60 or higher; 40 or higher for men and 50 or higher for women is acceptable.	Less than 100; below 70 if coronary artery disease is present.	Less than 149
Borderline High	200–239	N/A	130–159	150–199
High	240 or higher	N/A	160 or higher; 190 is considered very high.	200 or higher; 500 is considered very high.
Low	N/A	Less than 40	N/A	N/A

WHAT CAN I DO TO CONTROL MY CHOLESTEROL?

- Check your cholesterol numbers and family history with your doctor.
- Reduce saturated and trans fats. Limit red meat (beef, pork, venison and lamb) and fried foods.
- Use healthy cooking oils (vegetable, canola or olive oil).
- Limit daily cholesterol to 200mg or less.
- Decrease stress in your life.
- Increase your daily fiber intake.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat (1%) dairy products.
- Increase daily exercise and lose extra weight.
- Stop smoking.
- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor.