

Cholesterol

What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat found in your blood. Your body uses cholesterol for many reasons, but a high level of cholesterol increases your chance of heart disease, heart attack or stroke.

Good Cholesterol vs. Bad Cholesterol

Not all cholesterol in your blood is bad for you. There are two kinds of blood cholesterol that you should know about: **HDL** (good cholesterol) and **LDL** (bad cholesterol)

| Good Cholesterol | Bad Cholesterol |
|---|--|
| Good cholesterol is called HDL | Bad cholesterol is called LDL |
| Helps to keep the arteries from clogging up | Causes the build-up in your arteries that can lead to blockage and heart attack or stroke |
| Protects against heart disease | Causes heart disease |
| Good level = <i>60mg/dL or more</i> | Good level = <i>under 100mg/dL for diabetics and under 130 for people without diabetes</i> |



Things that Increase Your Risk of High Blood Cholesterol

- Your body makes too much cholesterol. (This is a family trait that you inherit.)
- Your diet is high in saturated fats or cholesterol.
- Your diet is high in sugar.
- You have diabetes, hypothyroidism or kidney disease.

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Things You Can Do to Lower Your LDL-Cholesterol Level

Avoid these foods:

- Fatty meats, organ meats (such as liver) and fried foods
- Full-fat dairy products
- Cookies, crackers, and cakes (especially store-bought versions with “trans-fats”)

Eat more of these foods:

- 1% or skim milk (1 glass of whole milk has as much fat as 4 strips of bacon)
- Skinless chicken breast, fish, and lean cuts of meat (such as pork or beef pieces called “loin”).
- **Foods with lots of fiber:**
- Oatmeal, barley, and other whole grains (avoid sugary oatmeal)
- Beans (garbanzo, kidney, pinto and black, to name a few)
- Fruits like bananas and apples
- Vegetables like Brussels sprouts and carrots

If you are overweight, try to lose weight.

Try to lose weight by cutting back on the amount that you eat. Even a small amount of weight loss can help lower your bad cholesterol, and you will also help your health in other ways.

Ask your provider if you need to take medicine to help lower your cholesterol.

How to Find Out If You Have High Cholesterol

- Go to your provider and ask for a cholesterol test. The test will let you know how much good and bad cholesterol you have.
- The doctor will tell you the number for your total cholesterol level.
- Your total cholesterol number should be under 200.

Sources:

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care

FDA: www.fda.gov

Health Information Translations:

www.healthinfotranslations.org

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