

Control Your Cholesterol

What Is High Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy material that comes from your body and the food that you eat. It is circulated through the blood. Cholesterol is a type of chemical known as a sterol. It forms part of the membranes that surround every cell and helps to determine which substances can pass in and out of the cells. Cholesterol is an essential component of the body that is also used to produce certain hormones, vitamin D, and the bile acids that help to digest fats.

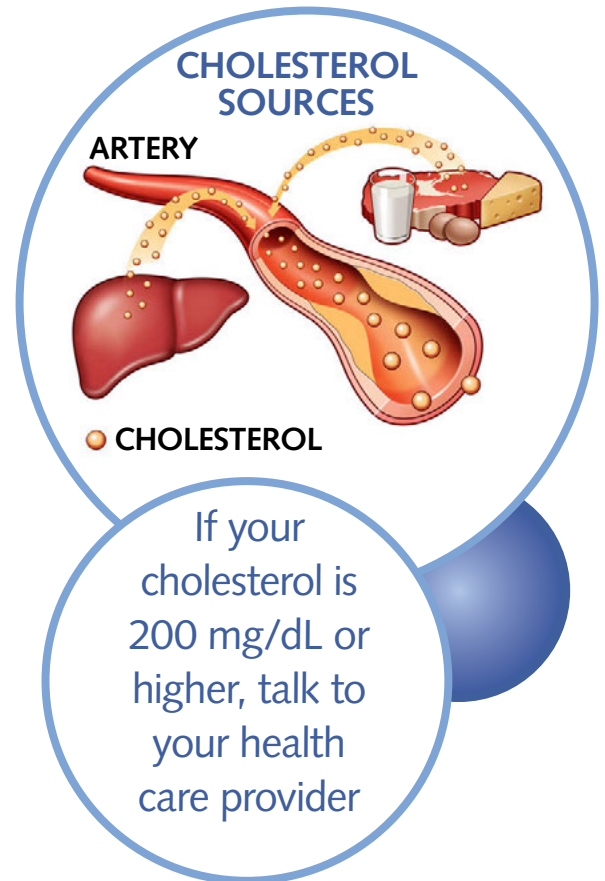
Cholesterol is found in foods such as: meat, poultry, and full-fat dairy products. Your cholesterol may be high if you eat a diet that is high in saturated fats and trans fat.

When your body has too much cholesterol, plaque forms and can cause blocked arteries. Plaque can build up, harden, break apart, and then cause blood clots. Blood clots can then cause a stroke.

Plaque-lined arteries become less flexible and do not deliver as much blood to your body. Blocked arteries can cause heart attacks and may raise blood pressure, which can eventually lead to heart damage or failure. Cholesterol and plaque can become lodged in your kidney's filters and cause problems regulating fluids and hormones.

Cholesterol cannot dissolve in your blood, but must be "carried through" your bloodstream by lipoproteins. Lowering your cholesterol helps your whole body get adequate blood supply and keeps your circulatory organs functioning well.

This health information is being provided for general educational purposes only. Your health care provider is the single best source of information regarding your health. Please consult your health care provider if you have any questions about your health or treatment.



Two Types of Cholesterol

When you have a blood test, you get a total cholesterol count. This count contains low-density lipoproteins cholesterol (LDL-C), high-density lipoproteins cholesterol (HDL-C), and triglyceride levels. Not all cholesterol is bad for you.

LDL-C is the “bad” cholesterol that can harden, block arteries, and form plaque. This condition is known as atherosclerosis. A plaque rupture or blockage may cause a heart attack or stroke. Some people who have high levels of LDL-C may have inherited the trait from one or both parents. This genetic disorder is called familial hypercholesterolemia. People who have this disorder are born with too much “bad” cholesterol and their body is not able to remove it from the blood.

Whether you are born with high levels of cholesterol or you develop it later in life, your chance of developing heart disease can be lowered.

HDL-C is the “good” cholesterol that helps remove the LDL-C from your arteries. A healthy level of HDL-C protects against heart attack.

Triglycerides are another type of fat. High levels of triglycerides also may cause atherosclerosis. Causes of high triglycerides include: being overweight, not being physically active, cigarette smoking, drinking too much alcohol, and eating a diet high in carbohydrates. When you have a high triglyceride level, you often have a high total cholesterol, including a high LDL-C and low HDL-C. Many people with high triglycerides have heart disease or diabetes.

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What You Can Do

- Change what you eat. Eat healthy food that is low in cholesterol, trans fat, and saturated fat. A diet high in fiber also helps control cholesterol levels.
- Take medication as prescribed.
- Schedule a cholesterol check-up.
- Get active. Exercise increases your body’s ability to make good cholesterol.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

If you have questions about why you need to take your medication as prescribed, ask your health care provider

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