

Cholesterol: What is it and how do I manage it?



Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance present in all the body's cells. Made in the liver, the body needs cholesterol to build cells, vitamins, and hormones.

Cholesterol in your body comes from **TWO** sources:



THE LIVER,
which makes all the
cholesterol you need

YOUR DIET,
Particularly: animal-based foods like meat, poultry,
dairy; certain oils like palm oil, palm kernel oil and
coconut oil, often found in baked goods



When does cholesterol become a health problem?

Cholesterol becomes a health risk when your cholesterol level goes from normal to unhealthy. Cholesterol circulates in the blood and can join with other substances to form a hard deposit in the arteries.

If a blood clot forms and blocks one of these narrowed arteries, it can lead to a heart attack or a stroke. High cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart attacks, heart disease, or strokes.

Your risk level can increase if you have either too much of the bad kind of cholesterol (LDL) or not enough of the good kind of cholesterol (HDL).

LOW-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (LDL).

LDL, the "bad" cholesterol transports cholesterol particles throughout your body. It builds up in the arteries.

HIGH-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (HDL).

HDL, the "good" cholesterol, picks up excess cholesterol and takes it back to your liver.

How does one get high cholesterol levels?

High cholesterol can be inherited, but it's often the result of unhealthy lifestyle choices. This means it can be both prevented and treated.

What can one do to minimize the risk?

Check your cholesterol levels.

- High cholesterol has no symptoms. A blood test is the only way to detect it. The recommendation is a cholesterol screening every one to two years for men aged 45 to 65, and for women aged 55 to 65.
- People over 65 should receive annual cholesterol tests.

Change your diet and lifestyle.

- Work with your doctor to manage your diet and exercise. If you are a smoker, have high blood pressure or diabetes, your risk level can increase.
- Saturated fats, found in fatty cuts of meat and full-fat dairy products, and trans fats, often found in packaged snacks or desserts, both raise bad cholesterol (LDL)
- Exercise helps to increase good cholesterol (HDL)
- Smoking can lower good cholesterol
- Too much alcohol can increase total cholesterol



Healthcare • Education • Action!

September is Cholesterol Education Month

Information from the American Heart Association, <https://www.heart.org/en> and the Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/symptoms-causes/syc-20350800>