

# Cholesterol and your health





# Understanding cholesterol

## What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in the blood and in all the cells of your body.

- Your liver makes all the cholesterol it needs. If it makes too much, you may have high cholesterol.
- Cholesterol is also found in some foods. Eating foods that are high in certain kinds of fat, like beef, pork, lamb, and cheese, can raise your cholesterol.

## Types of cholesterol

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Bad” cholesterol</li><li>• Can clog your arteries</li></ul>
High-density lipoprotein (HDL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Good” cholesterol</li><li>• Helps remove bad cholesterol</li></ul>
Triglycerides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most common fat in the body</li><li>• Can clog your arteries</li></ul>
Very-low-density lipoprotein (VLDL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Another type of “bad” cholesterol.</li><li>• Can clog arteries</li></ul>
Total cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes LDL, HDL, and triglycerides</li></ul>



## What is high cholesterol?

High cholesterol means that you have too much LDL in your blood. Having a high triglyceride level can also raise your total cholesterol level.

## How do I know if I have high cholesterol?

High cholesterol does not have any symptoms. Usually, you do not know if you have high cholesterol until you have a cholesterol test. Your health care provider can order the test for you.

- About 38% of American adults have high cholesterol (total blood cholesterol  $\geq$  200 mg/dL)
- You should have a cholesterol test at least every 4 to 6 years
- You may need a test more often if:
  - Your cholesterol is high
  - You are at risk for heart disease



## What health problems can high cholesterol cause?

Having too much LDL cholesterol and a high triglyceride level can raise your risk for heart disease, heart attack, or stroke.

- Over time, cholesterol can build up as plaque inside the arteries that go to your heart and brain
- Plaque can make your arteries hard and narrow and keep blood from getting to parts of your heart or brain
- If too little blood goes to your heart, you may have a heart attack
- If too little blood goes to your brain, you may have a stroke

# Managing my cholesterol

## Cholesterol questions to ask your health care provider

You may have questions for your health care provider about tests, medicines, and lifestyle changes. Below are examples of common questions.

**Do I have high cholesterol?**

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**What is a good cholesterol goal for me?**

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**How often should I have my levels checked?**

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**What kinds of physical activity can affect my cholesterol levels?**

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**Do I need to lose weight? If so, how much?**

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**What types of foods should I eat? Are there foods I should avoid?**

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**Will I need medicine to control my cholesterol levels? If so, what do you recommend?**

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**Other questions:**

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It's important to understand your cholesterol levels and your risks for high cholesterol. Ask your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns. Together you can make a treatment plan that is right for you.





## Steps you can take

Here are some things you can do to help manage your cholesterol:

- Eat fats that don't raise your cholesterol
- Eat lots of fiber
- Read food labels
- Be active
- Watch your weight

The next few pages offer more information about managing your cholesterol. Then, on pages 10 and 11, you can make your own action plan.

# Understanding fats and cholesterol

Your body needs some fat for energy. There are 3 kinds of fats that work differently:

Unsaturated fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do <b>not</b> raise cholesterol</li></ul>
Saturated fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Do</b> raise cholesterol</li></ul>
Trans fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Do</b> raise cholesterol</li></ul>



To keep your cholesterol down, try eating mostly unsaturated fats.



## Choosing fats that don't raise your cholesterol

Eat mostly unsaturated fats:

- They are usually liquid at room temperature
- They include olive, canola, corn, soybean, and many other oils
- Avocados and most nuts have unsaturated fat

Cut down on saturated fats:

- They are usually hard at room temperature
- They are in food from animals, like meat, butter, and cheese
- Palm oil is also a saturated fat

Cut down on trans fats:

- Trans fats form when liquid oil is turned into solid fat, such as margarine and shortening
- Donuts, fried foods, bakery goods, and crackers are usually high in trans fats



## Ideas to help you eat healthier

- Take the skin off chicken and the fat off meat before cooking it
- Eat more fish and less beef, pork, and lamb
- Broil, bake, or grill your chicken, fish, and meat
- Eat a small handful of unsalted nuts for a healthy snack. Walnuts and almonds are good choices
- Use a low-fat spread or a few drops of unsaturated oil, like olive or corn oil, for cooking
- Choose nonfat or low-fat (1%) milk, yogurt, and frozen yogurt



### Try cutting down on these foods

- Fatty meats (like bacon, sausage, and ribs)
- Chicken with skin
- Fried foods
- Bakery goods
- Crackers and chips
- Whole milk, cream, butter, ice cream, and cheese

# Adding fiber to your diet

Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, beans and peas, and whole grains.

- Eating more fiber may help lower your LDL cholesterol
- Fiber may also help lower your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- Fiber can help you feel full sooner. It can help you eat less and stay at a healthy weight

## Here are some ideas for adding fiber to your diet:



Eat more vegetables and fruits—with meals or as snacks.



Eat oatmeal or add oat bran to cereal.



Make soups and stews with kidney beans, pinto beans, lentils, split peas, or navy beans instead of meat.



Choose whole-grain pasta, whole-grain bread, or brown rice.

# Reading food labels

Look for this label on most packaged and canned foods. It is always called *Nutrition Facts*. Choose foods that are low in fat and cholesterol and high in fiber.

### Serving Size

The amount of food in 1 serving.

### Total Fat

The total amount of fat in a serving. Choose foods with a low percent daily value (5% or lower).

### Cholesterol

The amount of cholesterol in a serving. Choose foods with a low percent daily value (5% or lower).

### Dietary Fiber

The amount of fiber in a serving. Choose foods with a high percent daily value (20% or higher).

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	



## Being active

Even 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week may help lower your cholesterol. It may also keep your weight down. Being active helps reduce stress and increase energy.

- You may benefit from any activity that gets you moving
- Not all activities have to be structured exercises. However, if you enjoy that, you may look in your local newspaper to find low-cost exercise groups and classes at your level. You can also look at community centers, the YMCA, note boards at supermarkets, local high schools, and community colleges. Many local schools have tracks and pools for adult exercising

### Ideas to help you be more active

- Join or start a walking group
- Walk rather than drive or park farther away and walk
- Walk the dog
- Go on family bike rides or hikes
- Swim or take a water exercise class
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Do chores:
  - Garden
  - Rake leaves
  - Wash the car
  - Wash the windows or the floors

**Talk with your health care provider before you start an exercise program. Ask if it is safe for you.**



## Watching your weight

Being overweight can increase your chances of having high cholesterol. To help you stay at a healthy weight, be active and eat:

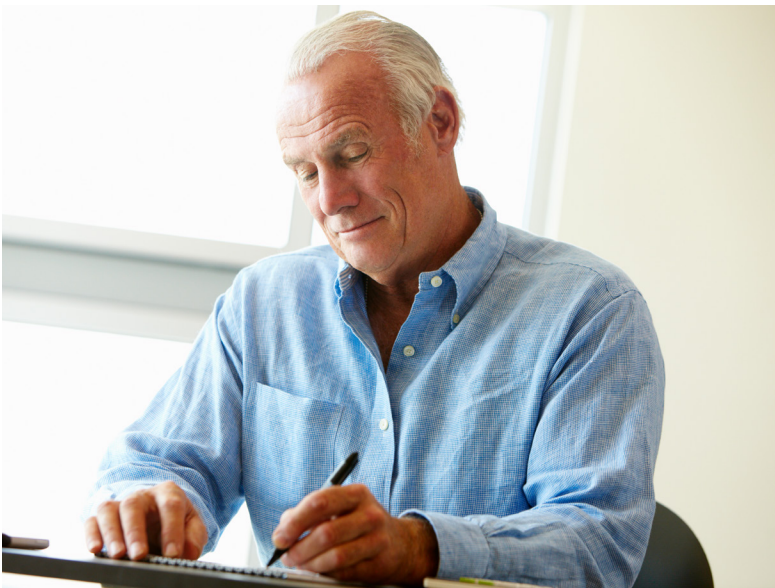
- Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, lean meat, and nonfat or low-fat dairy foods
- Less saturated and trans fats
- Foods high in fiber

# Making lifestyle changes

These healthy lifestyle changes can help you manage your cholesterol:

- Eat fats that don't raise your cholesterol
- Eat lots of fiber
- Read food labels
- Be active
- Watch your weight

Now you are ready to make an action plan.



## Sample action plan

Here is an example of an action plan. You can use the plan on the next page to make your own.

1. The lifestyle change I will make to help manage my cholesterol	Eat less saturated fat.
2. Things I will do to help make this change	Eat fish 1 or 2 times a week. Use nonfat or 1% milk in my coffee and on my cereal. Use only unsaturated oil.
3. How long I will try these things	12 weeks
4. How I will track my success	Keep a diary of what I eat for 3 months. Then talk with my health care provider about how I'm doing.
5. I will make an appointment with my health care provider to talk about my progress	<div>My appointment is on:</div> <div><div>April</div><div>/</div><div>12</div><div>/</div><div>1:00 PM</div><div>Month</div><div>Day</div><div>Time</div></div>



# My action plan

Make your own action plan by following the steps below. Use the chart to write down your plan.

- 1. Choose a lifestyle change you want to make.
- 2. Choose 2 or 3 things you can do to help make the change.
- 3. Choose how many weeks you will work on these things.
- 4. Decide how you will track success.
- 5. When you finish, talk about your progress with your health care provider.

1. The lifestyle change I will make to help manage my cholesterol	
2. Things I will do to help make this change	
3. How long I will try these things	
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5. I will make an appointment with my health care provider to talk about my progress	<div>My appointment is on:</div> <div><div></div><div>Month</div><div>/</div><div></div><div>Day</div><div>/</div><div></div><div>Time</div></div>

