
High Blood Cholesterol



Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that occurs naturally in all parts of the body. Your body needs some cholesterol to work properly. It produces cell membranes and some hormones vital for bodily functions. High levels of cholesterol in the blood can increase your risk of heart disease. It can stick to the walls of your arteries causing plaque build-up. Over time, plaque can narrow your arteries or even block them, called atherosclerosis, causing heart attack or stroke. Hypercholesterolemia is the medical term for high levels of blood cholesterol. Your cholesterol levels tend to rise as you get older. There are usually no signs or symptoms that you have high blood cholesterol, but it can be detected with a blood test. Cholesterol is measured in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). You are likely to have high cholesterol if members of your family have it, if you are overweight or if you eat a lot of fatty foods. High blood cholesterol is also a common side effect of HAART, or highly active antiretroviral treatment.

You can lower your cholesterol by exercising more, eating more fruits and vegetables, maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol consumption, and avoiding smoking. You also may need to take medicine to lower your cholesterol.

Measured Blood Cholesterol Levels

Total Cholesterol

A measure of LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, and other lipid components.

- Desirable: Less than 200mg/dL
- Borderline-High Risk: 200-239mg/dL
- High Risk: 240mg/dL and over

HDL

High-density lipoprotein or “good” cholesterol carries cholesterol from other parts of your body back to your liver for disposal. A high level of HDL cholesterol may lower risk of developing heart disease or stroke.

- High risk for heart disease: <40mg/dL for men, <50mg/dL for women
- Protection against heart disease: >60mg/dL

LDL

Low-density lipoprotein or “bad” cholesterol carries mostly fat and only a small amount of protein from the liver to other parts of the body. A high LDL cholesterol level, usually caused by eating too much saturated fat, trans fat and dietary cholesterol, may increase risk of developing heart disease. The lower the levels the better!

- Optimal: Less than 100mg/dL
- Near Optimal: 100-129mg/dL
- Borderline High: 130-159mg/dL
- High: 160-189mg/dL

For more information:

God's Love We Deliver, Nutrition Department

212-294-8103 or 800-747-2023

nutrition@glwd.org

www.glwd.org

- Very High: 190mg/dL and above

Triglycerides

Are a form of fat that the body uses to store energy. Excess calories, alcohol or sugar eaten is converted into triglycerides and stored as fat in the body. People with high levels usually also have high total & LDL cholesterol levels, and low HDL cholesterol levels.

- Normal: Less than 150mg/dL
- Borderline-High: 150-199mg/dL
- High: 200-499mg/dL
- Very High: 500mg/d

Nutrition and High Blood Cholesterol

There are several different types of dietary fat.

Saturated fats

The main dietary cause of high blood cholesterol and should be limited in the diet. The American Heart Association recommends less than 7% of fats consumed should come from saturated fats.

Sources of saturated fats

- Meats
- Poultry
- Shellfish
- Egg Yolks
- Butter
- Cheese
- Whole or 2% milk
- Cream
- Coconut, coconut oil
- Palm oil, palm kernel oil
- Cocoa butter

Trans fatty acids

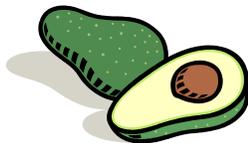
Increase the risk of heart disease because they tend to raise blood cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and lower HDL cholesterol levels. Trans fatty acids are found in very small amounts in beef, pork, lamb, and in the butterfat in butter and milk. They are also formed during the process of hydrogenation, making margarine, shortening, cooking oils and the foods made from them. These partially hydrogenated vegetable oils provide about three-fourths of the trans fatty acids in the US diet and it is important to avoid eating them.

Reducing the amount of saturated and trans fatty acids in your diet could help lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats

The two unsaturated fats and should be consumed the most frequently. Both have shown to lower LDL cholesterol levels.

- Salmon, trout, herring
- Avocados
- Olives
- Walnuts, almonds
- Liquid oils: soybean, corn, safflower, canola, olive and sunflower
- Flaxseed



Dietary changes may be the most effective way to keep cholesterol levels in the desirable range. The best change you can make is to reduce the amount of animal fat in your diet.

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Some helpful tips

- Keep total fat intake between 25-35% of calories, with most fats coming from sources of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.
- Avoid all products with trans fat, also called partially hydrogenated oil.
- Avoid foods high in cholesterol and saturated fat.
- Choose the leanest cuts of meat.
- Remove all visible fat from meat and poultry before cooking.
- Remove skin from poultry before eating.
- Eat low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
- Use trans fat free non-hydrogenated spreads (liquid or tub varieties) as a substitute for butter and harder stick forms. Look for 0g trans fat on the Nutrition Facts label.
- Avoid french fries, doughnuts, cookies, crackers, muffins, pies, and cakes.
- Don't bake with lard or hardened vegetable shortening, such as stick margarine or Crisco.
- Replace butter and shortening in cooking with canola, olive, soybean, and peanut oils or with tub margarines.
- Avoid frying or deep frying your food.
- Avoid egg yolks; instead consume only the egg white (no cholesterol!).
- Substitute tofu and legumes for meat.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.
- Increase your fiber intake.

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