

CHOLESTEROL

A high blood cholesterol level can significantly increase your risk for heart disease or stroke. Fortunately, high blood cholesterol is controllable. This fast sheet will explain what cholesterol is and describe dietary changes you and your family can make to reduce the risk of heart disease.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy-like substance made by our liver. Our body needs cholesterol to make vitamin D and hormones. Foods of animal origin contain dietary cholesterol, which can lead to high blood cholesterol if eaten in excess. Eating a diet high in saturated fat will also cause the body to produce more cholesterol. Over time, cholesterol deposits can build up and clog your blood vessels, blocking blood flow increasing your risk for heart disease or stroke.

What is your blood cholesterol level?

Cholesterol is carried through the body in protein packages called lipoproteins. When the doctor tells you your blood cholesterol level, it is actually a combination of two main types of lipoproteins - LDL (low-density lipoproteins) and HDL (high-density lipoproteins).

LDLs are known as “bad” cholesterol because they deposit fat and cholesterol in the arteries, causing them to become clogged. HDLs are called “good” cholesterol, because they help clear fat and cholesterol from arteries, hauling it to the liver for removal from the body.

Everyone over the age of twenty should have their blood cholesterol level checked at least once every five years. If your cholesterol level is “high”, have it checked more frequently by your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe cholesterol-lowering medicine in addition to a low fat, low cholesterol diet depending on your other risk factors for heart disease.

The National Cholesterol Education Program recently published new classifications for blood cholesterol levels (NCEP-ATPIII, May 2001). Cholesterol levels should be checked after you have fasted (nothing to eat or drink for at least 12 hours). The current blood cholesterol classifications are:

Total Cholesterol		LDL Cholesterol		HDL Cholesterol	
< 200	Desirable	< 100	Optimal	< 40	Low
200-239	Borderline high	100-129	Near optimal	60 +	High
240 +	High	130-159	Borderline high		
		160-189	High		
		190 +	Very high		

What can I do if I have high cholesterol?

- ◆ Eat less saturated fat - see other side for suggestions.

- ◆ Eat less trans fats, found in deep fried foods and processed foods that contain partially hydrogenated fats.
- ◆ If you are overweight, lose weight. This will help lower your total cholesterol level.
- ◆ Eat more fiber, especially soluble fiber - include fruits, oats, dried beans and legumes in your daily diet.
- ◆ Limit dietary cholesterol intake to less than 200 mg a day. Egg yolks and organ meats contain the highest amounts of cholesterol.
- ◆ Exercise regularly to help increase your HDL (good) cholesterol.
- ◆ Eat more foods made from soybeans (soy milk, tofu, soynuts, etc.)- 25 grams of soy protein a day added to a low fat diet can help reduce cholesterol.
- ◆ See a registered dietitian for individualized diet counseling. Ask your physician for a referral.

To Lower Intake of Saturated Fat & Cholesterol

Select More	Instead Of
Skim milk, 1% or nonfat milk products like yogurt or buttermilk.	Whole milk and whole milk products, 2% milk.
Lowfat cheeses with 5 grams fat or less per ounce (skim milk Mozzarella)	High fat cheeses (cheddar, colby, provolone, Swiss).
Sherbet, popsicles, ice milk and low fat frozen yogurt.	Ice cream or yogurt made with whole milk, cream
Lean cuts of meat (round, chuck, sirloin, rump), fish, turkey and chicken (remove all visible fat and skin). Limit to 3-ounce servings.	Marbled red meats, organ meats, sausage, bacon, processed luncheon meats.
Broiled, baked, roasted or grilled foods.	Pan or deep fried foods.
Liquid vegetable oils (canola, safflower, sunflower, peanut, olive), tub squeeze bottle, or soft margarine.	Shortening, lard, butter, hydrogenated fats and oils, coconut, palm and palm kernel oil.
Lowfat or fat-free sour cream or yogurt cheese.	Butter, margarine, or regular sour cream.
Convenience foods and dinners with 10 grams of fat or less per dinner.	Convenience foods, frozen dinners or pot pies.
Hard rolls, sourdough rolls, fat-free biscuits.	Biscuits, croissants, butter rolls.
Baked snack chips or pretzels.	Snack chips (potato chips, corn chips, etc.).
Fat free salad dressings or dressings with 2 grams fat per tablespoon, oil and vinegar.	Regular salad dressings (especially thousand island, bleu cheese and ranch).
Ginger snaps, graham crackers, low fat or fat free snack cakes, fig or other fruit bars, vanilla wafers.	Regular cookies or snack cakes, chocolate, candy bars or caramel.
Saltines, low fat wheat crackers, Wasa® wafers.	Ritz® or other buttery crackers.

Recommended Heart Healthy Resources

Cookbooks:

American Heart Association Low-Fat, Low-Cholesterol Cookbook, by Scott Grundy, MD, PhD. Times Books, 1998

American Heart Association Quick & Easy Cookbook, American Heart Association. Times Books, 1998

Healthy Homestyle Cooking and More Healthy Homestyle Cooking by Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD. Rodale Press 1994 and 2000.

Web Sites:

American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org - provides valuable information about preventing and treating heart disease and stroke including warning signs, risk factors and latest research.

Heart Information Network: www.heartinfo.org - information on the latest drugs and procedures.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov - provides a great resource center including a FAQ section and interactive tools to analyze your diet and create a heart healthy diet.