

Wellness News

Live Healthy, Stay Healthy!

Issue IX ■ September, 2021: Cholesterol Education



The Cholesterol Climb

What is Cholesterol?

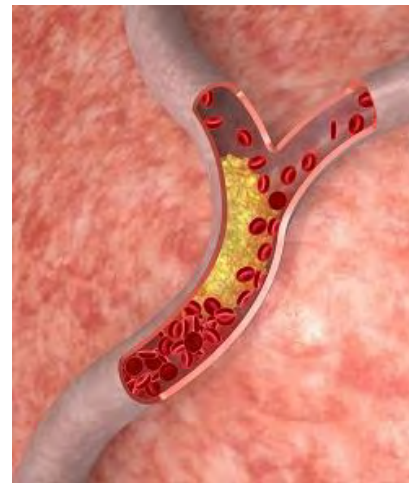
Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is found in the cells of your body. It is essential to not only building cells, but also in making other vitamins and hormones. Typically, cholesterol comes from two different sources; the foods you eat (i.e., meat, poultry, dairy products), as well as your liver. So where do the “bad” parts of cholesterol come into play? Since our liver makes all the needed cholesterol, when we consume the foods listed above (that typically contain more saturated and trans fats), this causes our liver to increase cholesterol production, causing unhealthy levels.

Reference: [What is Cholesterol? | American Heart Association](#)

The “good”, the “bad”, and the Triglycerides!

Cholesterol produced in the liver and sent out into the blood stream comes in two types of lipoproteins (carry cholesterol to and from cells):

- LDL (Low-Density Lipoprotein), also known as the “bad” cholesterol contributes to fatty buildup inside arteries, which increases the risk for heart attack and stroke. **See photo above for example of how plaque builds up in the arteries, blocking the flow of blood.**



Reference: [Cholesterol Communications Kit | CDC](#)

- HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein), also known as the “good” cholesterol at a healthy level helps protect against heart attack and stroke. HDL carries the “bad” cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver where it is broken down.
- Triglycerides are the third party. They are the most common type of fat (lipid) and store excess energy from foods you consume. Why do high triglycerides matter? Well, high levels of triglycerides, in addition to high LDL and low HDL may contribute to fatty buildup around the arteries, which increases risk of stroke and heart attack.

Food for Thought

The good news - you can improve your cholesterol levels with simple lifestyle changes!

Here are a few tips:

1. Eat heart-healthy foods. Focus on foods that are low in saturated and trans fats (ex: fruits, vegetables, whole grains).
2. Maintain a healthy weight by not only eating well, but also incorporating daily physical activity. Check out [How much physical activity do adults need? | Physical Activity | CDC](#) for more information.
3. Quit tobacco use. By quitting, you will improve your HDL, aka “good” cholesterol levels.

Eat the Healthy Stuff: Check those Nutrition Labels!

When purchasing food, checking the nutrition label is a valuable tool. You can use the labels to identify how much sodium, trans fat, saturated fat and cholesterol are in a food item. Don't be fooled! Just because a food item may say “low cholesterol” does not necessarily mean it is good for you. To learn more about understand nutrition labels, visit [Understanding Food Nutrition Labels | American Heart Association](#).

Here to Help: CareFirst Wellbeing!

To Register go to [Carefirst.com/Sharecare](https://carefirst.com/sharecare).

Health Coaching

Receive individual Coaching targeting areas like: Healthy Eating, Weight or Stress Management, Healthy Eating, and Tobacco Cessation.

Scale Back

Reduce your disease risk and lose weight with Scale Back! Work collaboratively with a Registered Dietitian and Health Coach to learn how to eat healthier, lose weight, and maintain your weight loss!

Tobacco Cessation

Find support through mindfulness tactics and support tools with the Craving to Quit Tobacco Cessation program.

Know your Numbers!

Part of staying in control of your health includes getting your cholesterol checked. Your doctor can work with you to create a plan to improve your numbers if needed! Be sure to connect with your Primary Care Physician and see what your cholesterol status is at least once a year.

Total Cholesterol	
Desirable	Less than 200 mg/dL
Borderline High	200-239 mg/dL
At Risk	240 mg/dL or higher

HDL levels	Men	Women
Desirable	60 mg/dL or above	60 mg/dL or above
At Risk	Less than 40 mg/dL	Less than 50 mg/dL

“When ‘I’ is replaced with ‘we’, even illness becomes wellness!”

National Resources

- American Heart Association:
[Cholesterol | American Heart Association](#)
[What Your Cholesterol Levels Mean | American Heart Association](#)
[How Can I Improve My Cholesterol? \(heart.org\)](#)
- CDC Information and Communications:
[Cholesterol Information | cdc.gov](#)
[Cholesterol Communications Kit | CDC](#)
[Cholesterol Patient Education Handouts | cdc.gov](#)
- NIH:
[Blood Cholesterol | NHLBI, NIH](#)
- American Diabetes Association:
[Fats | ADA \(diabetes.org\)](#)