

## > What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced in the liver and found in the body's cells. The right amount of cholesterol is healthy. Your body produces the amount it needs to function properly.

If you have high cholesterol, it can be because of two things: the foods you eat, and a family history of high cholesterol.

### Bad cholesterol vs. good cholesterol

LDL cholesterol is "bad." It is sticky and often builds up in the blood vessels, like plaque. High LDL cholesterol leads to serious health problems, such as heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. HDL cholesterol is "good." It carries LDL cholesterol out of the blood stream. A high level of HDL cholesterol is good for your health.

### How does food affect my cholesterol?

Cholesterol is found in foods that come from animals. Egg yolks and organ meats like liver are examples of foods that are very high in cholesterol. You should limit all fats in your diet. Saturated fats raise cholesterol levels the most.

### Treating high cholesterol

Nutrition and exercise help to lower your cholesterol. Your doctor may also recommend medication to lower cholesterol. Reducing cholesterol is the key to lowering your risk for heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

### Questions to ask your healthcare provider

- > How often should I have my cholesterol tested?
- > What are my target cholesterol levels?



### What food should I eat to improve my cholesterol?

- > Choose plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- > Use nonfat or low-fat dairy products.
- > Buy meat that is extra lean. Choose fish or remove the skin from chicken or turkey.
- > Use egg substitutes or only the egg whites.
- > Use olive or canola oil.

### When eating out

- > Ask to have sauces, salad dressings and gravy on the side. Use sparingly.
- > Avoid fried foods or those prepared with a lot of cheese.
- > Substitute salad for french fries.

### When cooking

- > Trim fat from meats and remove the skin.
- > Bake, broil or roast instead of fry.
- > Use herbs for seasoning instead of butter or cream sauces.



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