

CHOLESTEROL:

What you need to know

What is cholesterol?

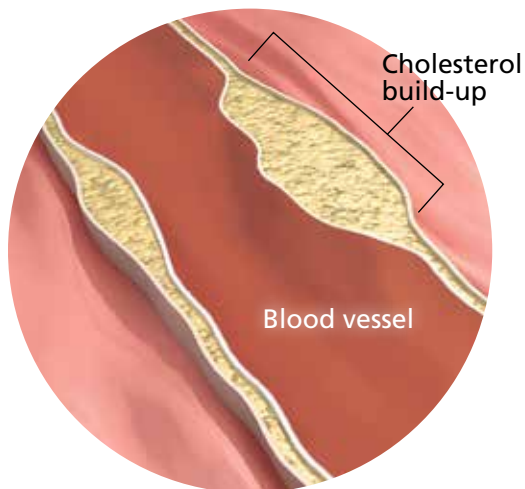
Cholesterol is a fatty substance in the blood. You need some cholesterol to be healthy, but too much can build up in your arteries and may cause a heart attack or stroke.

Measuring cholesterol

Cholesterol is measured with a blood test. It's important to know your numbers.

Total cholesterol is the amount of cholesterol in your blood. It is made up of:

- **LDL**, "bad" cholesterol
- **HDL**, "good" cholesterol
- **Triglycerides**, a type of fat in the blood



Managing cholesterol

Cholesterol-lowering medicine is recommended if you are at high risk of having a heart attack or stroke, such as if you:

- Had a heart attack, stroke, angioplasty or stent, or heart bypass surgery due to blockages in your arteries
- Have LDL of 190 or higher
- Have type 2 diabetes and are age 40 to 75
- Are 40 to 75 and your risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years is above a certain level using a risk estimator

In some cases, medicine may be right for you even if you are not in one of these groups.

No matter your risk, it is helpful for you to eat a healthy diet, stop smoking, stay active, and work to maintain a healthy weight. You have the power to make changes to improve your health.

✓ Your Risk Factors

You and your health care team may use the ASCVD (atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease) Risk Estimator Plus app or web site to help determine your risk of a heart attack or stroke. tools.acc.org/ascvd-risk-estimator

Blood pressure

Systolic: top number ____
Diastolic: bottom number ____

Taking medicine for high blood pressure

Yes ____ No ____

Total cholesterol ____ HDL ____ LDL ____

Taking a statin medicine Yes ____ No ____

History of diabetes? Yes ____ No ____

Smoking—including cigarettes, cigars and e-cigarettes

Current ____ Former ____ Never ____

Taking aspirin every day Yes ____ No ____

History of diabetes, including during pregnancy

Yes ____ No ____

Talk to your health care team about other factors that increase your risk.

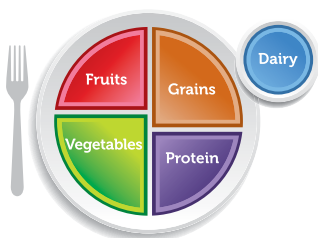
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Your plan for healthy eating

When you choose healthy foods, you can lower your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

- Eat several servings of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Choose fiber-rich foods. Select vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, whole wheat bread, brown rice and oatmeal.
- Eat fish at least 2 times a week. Choose fatty fish like salmon, trout, and sardines.
- Eat healthy fats:
 - Choose good fats found in foods like fatty fish, vegetable oils, avocados, and nuts.
 - Limit bad saturated fats found in foods like fatty meats, whole milk, butter, ice cream, and cheese.
 - Don't eat trans fats found in foods like baked goods, snack foods, and fast foods.
- Cut down on processed foods, portion sizes, and salt. This is even more important if you are overweight, have high blood pressure or high blood sugar.
- Limit soda, sports drinks, fruit juices, and alcohol. Choose water, low-fat milk, or skim/nonfat milk.
- Use a notebook or an online tool or app to keep track of what you eat.

Use reliable sources to help you make healthy food choices, such as **ChooseMyPlate.gov** and **healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov**.



Choose **MyPlate**.gov



Your exercise plan

- Any activity is good. Just move.
- Choose an activity that you like. Walk, bike, swim, dance, or hike most days.
- Exercise at a comfortable pace. Remember to warm up and cool down.
- Aim for 30-60 minutes of activity a day, even 10-15 minutes at a time.
- Add muscle-strengthening exercise twice each week, such as lifting weights or push-ups.
- Use an activity tracker, pedometer or app to measure how much you move.

✓ Check off the actions you will take:

- Keep your walking shoes in the car. Go for a 15-minute walk during your lunch break. Park farther away from the store or get off the bus a few blocks early and walk.
- Exercise, stretch, or do chores while you watch TV.
- Take activity breaks.
- Limit your time watching TV or sitting at a computer.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Play with your kids or grandkids after dinner.

Cholesterol-lowering medicines

- Sometimes diet and exercise are not enough to improve your cholesterol and lower your risk for heart attack or stroke. Your health care provider may prescribe one or more medicines.
- There are several types of medicines that work in different ways, such as statins, cholesterol-blocking agents, PCSK9 inhibitors, and prescription fish oil.
- Taking these medicines can be life-saving. Studies show they can lower your risk of heart attack or stroke.
- Ask your health care provider if there are any side effects you should know about.

Get the most out of your medicines

- It is very important to take your medicines as prescribed.
- After 4 to 6 weeks of taking cholesterol medicines, your nurse or doctor may order blood tests. These tests make sure the medicines are working and are safe for you.