

# What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat that comes from two sources—blood cholesterol that is made by your body in the liver and dietary cholesterol that comes from the food you eat. Your body makes all of the cholesterol it needs, and it uses this cholesterol to do important jobs like building cells and making vitamin D and some hormones. You don't need to get cholesterol from the foods you eat. Dietary cholesterol is found in animal foods like meats, seafood, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. These foods are also high in saturated fats and trans-fat which can cause the liver to make too much cholesterol. If there is too much cholesterol in the body, the blood vessels can get clogged which can lead to heart disease, heart attacks and strokes.

There are good and bad types of cholesterol.

## "Good" (HDL) Cholesterol

High-Density Lipoprotein or HDL is also called good cholesterol. You need good cholesterol to carry "bad" cholesterol out of your body and keep your body working right.

## "Bad" (LDL) Cholesterol

Low-Density Lipoprotein or LDL is also called bad cholesterol. It can build up on the walls of your blood vessels and block blood flow to your heart and other organs. This can cause heart attack or stroke.

## Triglycerides

Triglycerides are the most common kind of fat found in your body. If your triglyceride level is too high, it can cause fatty buildups in your blood vessels. This increases your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

### What should my cholesterol be?

You should not let your good cholesterol get too low. You should not let your bad cholesterol get too high. Keeping them both under control can help you live a healthier life and avoid many kinds of illnesses.

### "Good" (HDL) Cholesterol

40 or more (men)  
50 or more (women)

### "Bad" (LDL) Cholesterol

100 or less

### Triglycerides

Less than 150



## Ways to keep healthy cholesterol levels

Here are some ways you can keep your cholesterol levels normal:

- Stop smoking or using nicotine products, like vaping or chewing tobacco
- Limit the alcohol you drink
- Lose weight, if needed
- Exercise for at least 150 minutes each week. Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise plan.
- Eat a heart healthy diet with foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains like oatmeal, beans, fish and seafood, and poultry.
- Take cholesterol medicine and other medicines your doctor has prescribed.



Some other health problems can raise your chances of high cholesterol. If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, talk to your doctor about other ways to lower this risk.

### Check your cholesterol and live healthier!

Keeping your cholesterol levels normal is an important part of living a healthy life. See your doctor at least once a year to have your cholesterol checked. If you have a history of high cholesterol or if you take medicine for it, you will need to be checked more often. Follow your doctor's orders.

### Want to learn more?

If you want to learn more about controlling your cholesterol, call us at 1-800-578-0603 (TTY: 711). We're here to help!