

# High Cholesterol (Hyperlipidemia)

## Overview

Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance that is an important part of your body because it helps your body use fats, insulates your nerve and brain tissues, and helps make hormones. Cholesterol and other fats can't dissolve in the blood. They have to be transported to and from the cells by special carriers called lipoproteins. There are several kinds, but the ones to focus on are low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL). Each has a different job in your body.

## LDL

This is called the “bad” cholesterol because pieces of it easily become stuck along blood vessel walls and together with other substances, it can form plaque, which is a thick, hard deposit that can clog your blood vessel walls.

A clot that forms near this plaque can block the blood flow to part of the heart muscle and cause

a heart attack. If a clot blocks the blood flow to part of the brain, a stroke results. A high level of LDL cholesterol (160 mg/dL and above) reflects an increased risk of heart disease.

## HDL

This is called the “good” cholesterol. It finds and rescues the stuck LDL pieces and brings them back to the liver. A high HDL level seems to protect against heart attack. The opposite is also true — a low HDL level (less than 40 mg/dL) indicates a greater risk of heart attack. A low HDL cholesterol level also may raise the risk of stroke.

## Testing Your Cholesterol Level

Cholesterol tests are done at health fairs, doctor's offices, shopping malls and pharmacies. Often, the test is free or inexpensive. Once you know what your cholesterol level is, you can see if you're at an increased risk for heart disease and begin to control your cholesterol.



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## Improving Your Diet

This is often the most effective way to lower or maintain your cholesterol at a desirable level, though it may take a few months to begin to see the results. The most helpful thing you can do is to lower the amount of fat you eat. This helps lower your cholesterol and helps you lose weight. Here are some helpful tips:

**Eat Less Fat** - Your goal is to limit the fats in your diet to 1/3 of your total calories and to reduce to amount of saturated fat you eat. Do this by avoiding “obvious” fats such as butter and “hidden” fats used in processed foods.

**Eat Less Cholesterol** - Limit your use of high- cholesterol foods such as eggs and fatty meats from all animals, especially organ meats.

**Eat More Fiber** - Soluble fiber lowers your cholesterol level by keeping the cholesterol from being absorbed by your body. Oats, beans, and some fruits and vegetables are rich in soluble fiber.

**Eat More Complex Carbohydrates** - Build your meals around complex carbohydrates such as beans, root vegetables, and whole-grain breads, cereals and rice. Vegetables and fruits are also good low-fat choices.

**Drink Less Alcohol** - Drinking too much alcohol may raise your cholesterol level by raising the fat levels in your blood. If you're a man, have no more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day. If you're a woman, have no more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.

## Exercise and Weight Loss

In addition to improving your diet, losing weight and exercising regularly can drastically improve your cholesterol levels. Also, get your cholesterol level rechecked periodically. This way, you can be sure you're maintaining a healthy cholesterol level.

A regular exercise program may help raise your HDL “good” cholesterol level, can help you lose weight and reduce other heart risks. Exercises such as walking, jogging or swimming at least four times

a week for 30 minutes each time can help lower your cholesterol.

If you weigh too much, your body stores more fat and cholesterol, and may cause your body's cholesterol level to rise. The quickest way to lose weight is to reduce the amount of fat in your diet. Ask your doctor what your target weight range should be. If you need to lose weight, it's best to lose it slowly!

## For More Information...

Visit these Web sites for more information on cholesterol and how to lower it:

The American Heart Association:  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

National Institutes of Health:  
[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

	Desirable	Borderline	High-Risk
Total	Lower than 200	200-239	250 or Higher
LDL	Lower than 100	130-159	160 or Higher
HDL	40 or Higher	--	Lower than 35



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[www.nwbetterhealth.com](http://www.nwbetterhealth.com)  
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