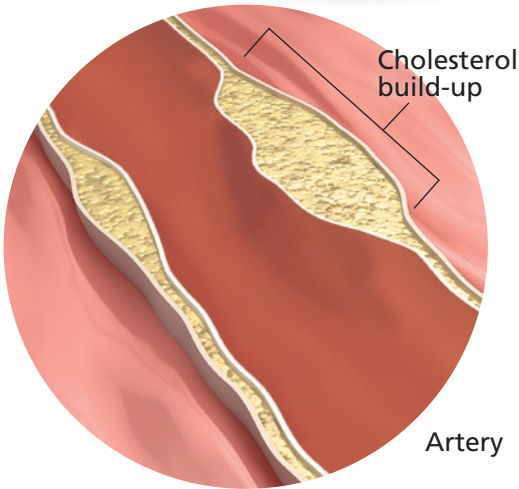


# CHOLESTEROL:

## 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.

Cholesterol is measured with a blood test. Your nurse or doctor can order this test for you.

### Your cholesterol test

It's important to know your numbers for total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, and triglycerides.

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

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

### Cholesterol guidelines

The 2013 cholesterol guidelines recommend cholesterol-lowering medicine for people who are at high risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

Cholesterol-lowering medicine may be right for you if:

- You have had a heart attack, stroke, angioplasty or stent, or heart bypass surgery due to blockages in your arteries
- Your LDL (bad) cholesterol level is 190 or higher
- You have type 2 diabetes and are between 40 and 75 years old
- You are between 40 and 75 years old and your risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years is above a certain level.

In some cases, cholesterol-lowering medicine might be the right plan for you even if you are not in one of the groups listed above.

### ✓ Check off your risk factors

#### Risk factors you can't change:

- ☐ Family history of early heart disease
- ☐ Age: Men 45 years or older, women 55 years or older
- ☐ African American race

#### Risk factors you can change:

- ☐ Smoking cigarettes or cigars
- ☐ High blood pressure (or take medicine for high blood pressure)
- ☐ Diabetes or high blood sugar
- ☐ High LDL cholesterol
- ☐ Low HDL cholesterol

The more checks you have, the greater your risk of heart attack and stroke. Make sure you discuss all of your risk factors with your nurse or doctor to agree on a healthy lifestyle plan that's right for you.

Making changes in your lifestyle can help improve all your risk factors including your cholesterol.

A healthy diet, not smoking, regular exercise, and getting closer to a healthy weight (and staying there) are good for everybody—no matter what your risk is of having a heart attack or stroke. You have the power to make changes to improve your health.

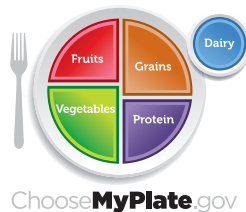
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### Your plan for healthy eating

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

- Eat at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Eat 3 servings of fiber-rich whole grains a day. Choose foods like whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oatmeal.
- Eat fish at least 2 times a week. Choose fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and trout.
- 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.
- Eat legumes like beans, lentils, or a small handful of nuts.
- Limit soda, sports drinks, fruit juices, and alcohol.
- Choose water, low-fat milk, or skim milk.
- Use a notebook or an online tool or app to keep track of what you eat.
- Cut down on calories, portion sizes, and salt. This is even more important if you are overweight, or have high blood pressure or high blood sugar. A helpful website with more information about heart-healthy eating plans is:  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- It turns out that what's good for your blood pressure is good for your cholesterol, too. This web address will take you to a booklet that explains the DASH eating plan and provides weekly menus and recipes:  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new\\_dash.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf)
- When you choose healthy foods, you will lower your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.



### Your exercise plan

- Choose an activity that you like. Walk, bike, swim, dance, or hike most days.
- Warm up and stretch before you exercise.
- Exercise at a comfortable pace.
- Aim for 30-60 minutes of activity a day.
- Take time to cool down and stretch after you exercise.
- Use an activity tracker or pedometer to measure how much you move.
- You can break your exercise session up into 10-15 minutes at a time.
- Remember, some activity is better than none!

### ✓ 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.
- ☐ 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.

### What should I know about cholesterol medicines?

- Many large research studies have shown that the cholesterol medicines called statins can make a big difference in lowering risk of heart attack and stroke. Talk to your nurse and doctor about whether these medicines might be the right choice for you.
- Statin medicines are very safe. Only a very small number of people who take them have side effects. Talk with your nurse or doctor if you have any questions or concerns before taking a statin.
- For some people—like those who have had problems with statins in the past, those who take a number of other medicines, or have liver or kidney disease—another type of cholesterol medicine may be used, either alone or with a statin.

### Get the most out of your medicines

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.