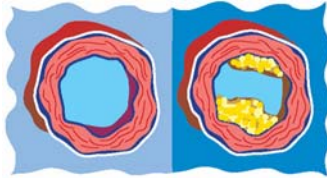




WHAT DO MY CHOLESTEROL NUMBERS MEAN?

What is cholesterol? Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is naturally present in all parts of the body. It is used to make cell walls and vitamin D. It comes from the food you eat, and is produced naturally by your liver. Too much cholesterol can cause a build-up of fat and cholesterol in your arteries.

A normal coronary artery.



An artery with buildup of plaque.

When an artery to the brain is blocked, a stroke can happen.

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood.

Total Cholesterol is the sum of all the cholesterol in your blood.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and above	High

Low density lipoproteins (LDL) are “bad” cholesterol. Most blood cholesterol is LDL and is the main source of build-up and blockages in the arteries. *For LDL, lower numbers are better.*

LDL Cholesterol Level	LDL-Cholesterol Category
Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal/above optimal
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160-189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very high

High density lipoproteins (HDL) are “good” cholesterol that protects against heart disease. *For HDL, higher numbers are better.*

HDL Cholesterol Level	HDL-Cholesterol Category
Less than 40 mg/dL	A major risk factor for heart disease
40-59 mg/dL	The higher your HDL, the better
60 mg/dL and above	An HDL of 60 mg/dL and above is considered protective against heart disease

Triglycerides are another form of fat in your blood that should be monitored along with your cholesterol.

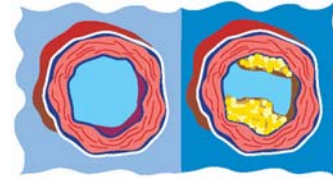
Triglyceride Level	Triglyceride Category
Less than 50 mg/dL	Normal
150-199 mg/dL	Borderline High
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WHAT CAN I DO TO LOWER MY CHOLESTEROL LEVEL?

There are two main ways to lower your cholesterol:

DIET & EXERCISE
MEDICATION



Saturated Fat and Cholesterol in the foods you eat can make your blood cholesterol level go up.

A first step to lowering your blood cholesterol level is changing your lifestyle by decreasing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you consume, and by increasing your physical activity.*

Saturated fat comes from animal food sources, such as fatty cuts of meat (regular ground beef, bologna, hot dogs, sausage, bacon and spareribs), whole milk, and whole milk products like cheddar cheese or ice cream. Saturated fat is also found in hydrogenated vegetable fats such as solid shortening (Crisco) and hard margarine, and in coconut and palm kernel oil.

Cholesterol is only found in animal sources such as egg yolks; meats (especially organs like liver, kidneys, and sweetbreads); game meats; poultry skin; and some fish.

So what do I need to do with my diet and exercise?

- ✓ Eat a low-fat diet. Strive for at least 5 servings per day of fruits and vegetables. Choose reduced fat or non-fat versions of milk, cheese, sour cream, and yogurt.
- ✓ Limit saturated fat. Choose lean cuts of meat, trim visible fat, remove skin from poultry and opt for cooking methods that do not add fat, such as baking, grilling, broiling, roasting, or boiling.
- ✓ Limit high cholesterol foods such as meats, egg yolks, organ meats, and dairy products made with whole milk. Eat fish rich in Omega-3 fatty acids (sardines, salmon, mackerel, and trout)
- ✓ Eat a high fiber diet. Foods such as beans, oatmeal, barley, brown rice, apples, strawberries and carrots are good sources of soluble fiber, which has been found most helpful for decreasing cholesterol levels.
- ✓ Obtain or maintain a healthful body weight.

**Always consult with your physician before beginning any diet or exercise program.*

What about cholesterol-lowering medications?

There are several types of medicines to lower cholesterol, but they must be used in conjunction with diet and exercise lifestyle changes. Ask your physician or health care provider if these medicines are right for you.



Information provided courtesy of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. The creation of these materials was funded by VA HSR&D Stroke QUERI Project #QLP 71-001.



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