

Learning About High Cholesterol

What is high cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. It is needed for many body functions, such as making new cells. Cholesterol is made by your body. It also comes from food you eat.

If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in your arteries. This is called hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis. High cholesterol raises your risk of a heart attack and stroke.

There are different types of cholesterol. LDL is the "bad" cholesterol. High LDL can raise your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. HDL is the "good" cholesterol. High HDL is linked with a lower risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

Your cholesterol levels help your doctor find out your risk for having a heart attack or stroke.

How can you prevent high cholesterol?

A heart-healthy lifestyle can help you prevent high cholesterol. This lifestyle helps lower your risk for a heart attack and stroke.

- Eat heart-healthy foods.
 - Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains (like oatmeal), dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds, soy products (like tofu), and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
 - Replace butter, margarine, and hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils with olive and canola oils. (Canola oil margarine without trans fat is fine.)
 - Replace red meat with fish, poultry, and soy protein (like tofu).
 - Limit processed and packaged foods like chips, crackers, and cookies.
- Be active. Exercise can improve your cholesterol level. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Stay at a healthy weight. Lose weight if you need to.
- Don't smoke. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

How is high cholesterol treated?

The goal of treatment is to reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke. The goal is not to lower your cholesterol numbers only.

- You may make lifestyle changes, such as eating healthy foods, not smoking, losing weight, and being more active.
- You may have to take medicine.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.



Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **Q621** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About High Cholesterol**".

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