

High Blood Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance found in all body cells. It is carried through the body in the blood. Having high blood cholesterol increases your chance of having a heart attack. It can build up in the arteries that supply blood to the heart. This build-up can slow or stop the flow of blood to the heart, leading to a heart attack.

Have your blood cholesterol checked at least every five years if you are age 20 or older. A complete blood cholesterol test will include three measures: total cholesterol, LDL, and HDL.

You may be at risk for a heart attack if:

- **Your total cholesterol is 240 mg/dL or higher.** A level of 200 mg/dL or lower is better.
- **Your LDL is 160 mg/dL or higher.** LDL (“lousy” or “bad” cholesterol) causes a build-up of cholesterol on the walls of the arteries. A level of 100 mg/dL or lower is better.
- **Your HDL is 40 mg/dL or lower.** HDL (“healthy” or “good” cholesterol) removes cholesterol from the blood and carries it to the liver. HDL prevents cholesterol and other fats from building up in the arteries. A level of 60 mg/dL or higher is best.

High blood cholesterol can be prevented or controlled by having a healthy lifestyle.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight raises blood cholesterol. A healthy weight means lower blood cholesterol for most people.
- **Be physically active.** Regular physical activity helps maintain healthy weight. It also increases “healthy” cholesterol (HDL), which can help protect your heart. Try going for a brisk, 30-minute walk on most days of the week.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Saturated fat and cholesterol in high-fat meats and dairy products raises blood cholesterol. Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grain breads and cereals, and low-fat dairy foods and meats.

- **Be smoke free.** Smoking lowers “healthy” cholesterol (HDL), which can increase your chance of having a heart attack. Get help to quit smoking.



Making these lifestyle changes may be enough to lower your blood cholesterol. If not, your doctor may prescribe medicine along with the lifestyle changes to lower your blood cholesterol. Be sure to take your medicine every day as prescribed by your doctor.