



# Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is naturally produced by the liver in our bodies. It is essential for the production of hormones and Vitamin D and an integral part of cell membranes. The level produced by our bodies is safe in most people.

Foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol, like meats, eggs, and dairy products, can raise our total cholesterol to a dangerous level. When our bodies cannot use all of the cholesterol, it is deposited along the arterial walls as plaque. As the plaque hardens and builds up, it contributes to the formation of blood clots.

Since high cholesterol does not have any signs or symptoms, many people do not know their cholesterol level is too high. A blood test is necessary to check your cholesterol levels.

A person with high cholesterol levels is at great risk for a heart attack or stroke.

## “Good” Cholesterol vs. “Bad” Cholesterol

Total cholesterol is made up of two components, High density Lipoproteins (HDL) and Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL).

**HDL** is the “good” cholesterol. It carries cholesterol through the blood, but instead of depositing the excess on the arterial wall, it returns it to the liver. A high HDL number is associated with reduced risk of heart attack and stroke.

**LDL** is the “bad” cholesterol. It circulates around the body depositing cholesterol where it is needed. But if there is excess, it is deposited along the arterial wall and turns into plaque. A person with a high LDL number is at great risk for heart attack or stroke.

Total Cholesterol	
Less than 200 mg/dl	Desirable
200 to 239 mg/dl	Borderline High
240 mg/dl and above	High

  

HDL	
60 mg/dl and above	Protective against heart disease
40 to 59 mg/dl	Some risk
Less than 40 mg/dl	Major risk for heart disease and stroke

  

LDL	
Less than 100 mg/dl	Optimal
100 to 129 mg/dl	Near optimal
130 to 159 mg/dl	Borderline High
160 mg/dl to 189 mg/dl	High
190 mg/dl and above	Very High (Talk to your doctor)



## Lowering Your High Cholesterol

- ❖ Healthy Eating
    - Eat foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol
    - Increase the soluble fiber in your diet. For example, oatmeal, lima beans, and apples.
    - Include whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables, and fish in your diet.
  - ❖ Physical Activity — Physical activity helps lower LDL levels and raise HDL levels. Thirty (30) minutes a day of moderate physical activity (brisk walking, yard work, house work, climbing stairs), most days of the week, is recommended.
  - ❖ Weight Management — Being overweight or obese increases your chance of having cholesterol. Eating healthy and exercising more can help you lose weight.
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(225) 342-8094

[www.laheart.dhh.louisiana.gov](http://www.laheart.dhh.louisiana.gov)