

# Cholesterol & Your Heart: What You Need to Know



## Learn more about

1 Why your cholesterol levels matter.

2 What healthy cholesterol levels are.

3 What to do if you have high cholesterol.

## What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in your cells. Our bodies generally make all the cholesterol needed for good health. Cholesterol helps make hormones, vitamin D, and substances to help you digest foods.

Small packages, called lipoproteins, carry cholesterol through your bloodstream. Two kinds of lipoproteins carry the cholesterol. You may have heard about “good” and “bad” cholesterol. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is the “good” cholesterol. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is the “bad” cholesterol.



HDL helps your body get rid of cholesterol so it doesn't clog your arteries. High levels of HDL may lower your risk of a heart attack, stroke, and other health problems.



LDL deposits cholesterol inside the blood vessels that carry blood to your heart and other parts of your body. Over time, this may cause your arteries to narrow or get blocked, which can cause a heart attack, stroke, or other health problems.



Triglycerides are a type of fat in your blood that your body uses for energy. A combination of high triglyceride and low HDL levels can increase your risk for heart attack and stroke.

Unhealthy cholesterol levels can harm your heart health. Undiagnosed or untreated high LDL or “bad” cholesterol can lead to serious problems, such as heart attack and stroke. That’s why it’s important to take steps to get and keep your cholesterol in a healthy range.

Heart-healthy lifestyle changes can help you control your cholesterol:

- Be physically active
- Eat a heart-healthy diet
- Aim for a healthy weight
- Quit smoking or vaping
- Reduce stress
- Get enough good-quality sleep

