

Be Well

Highs and Lows of Cholesterol

Understanding Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that circulates in the blood. Your body needs some cholesterol in order to function properly, but having too much can put you at increased risk for disease.

Cholesterol is made by your liver in order to digest fatty food and make hormones.

Dietary Cholesterol comes from eating animal products like fatty meats and cheese is often in the form of saturated fats.

“Good” vs “Bad” Cholesterol

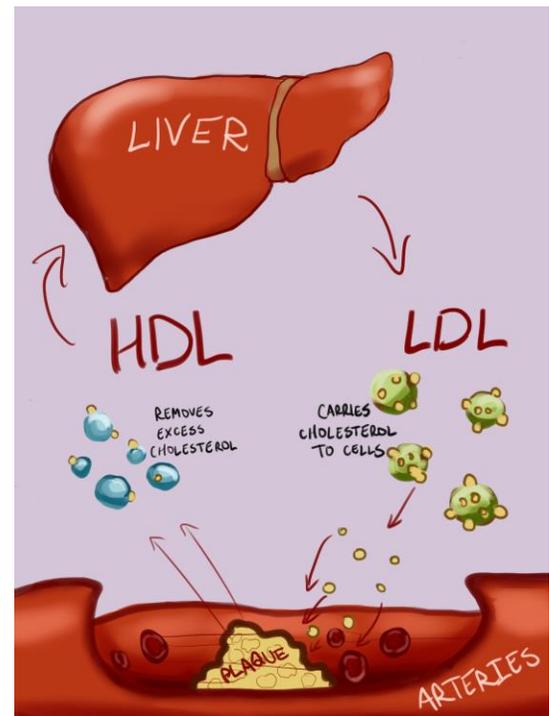
There are two types of lipoproteins that transport cholesterol; High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) and Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL).

LDL, often known as “bad cholesterol” because is the main source of cholesterol buildup in arteries.

HDL, often known as “good cholesterol,” absorbs the bad cholesterol (LDL) and transports it back to the liver where it can be flushed from the body.

Triglycerides are another type of fat in the body that store excess energy from your diet. A high level of triglycerides in combination with a low HDL or high LDL level puts you at increased risk for disease.

When your body has high levels of LDL (bad cholesterol), low levels of HDL (good cholesterol), and high triglycerides, cholesterol builds up inside your blood vessels over time. This buildup blocks blood flow to and from your heart and organs which increases the risk for coronary artery disease, heart attack, stroke, and peripheral artery disease (PAD).



From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader: Keriann Hill

Maintaining Healthy Cholesterol Levels

Get Checked: Most importantly, get your cholesterol checked by getting a blood test. Younger adults should get their cholesterol checked every 5 years. Older adults should have their cholesterol checked every 1-2 years.

Stay Active: Regular physical activity can raise your HDL levels and lower your LDL levels. If you are not physically active, you are already at risk for heart disease. Aim for 30 minutes of activity every day.

Don't Smoke: Smoking lowers your HDL (good) cholesterol which increases your level of bad cholesterol and risk for disease.

Manage Stress: Chronic stress can sometimes have a negative effect on cholesterol by lowering HDL levels and raising LDL levels.

Read Food Labels: Reduce the amount of saturated and trans fats in your diet in order to lower your overall and LDL (bad) cholesterol. Foods to limit/avoid include, but are not limited to, fatty meats, whole milk, fried foods, processed foods, dairy, butter, and cheese. Instead, try to swap your unhealthy fats for healthy ones! Some healthy fats include nuts, avocados, olive oil, and flax seeds. Experts advise keeping your saturated fat consumption to less than 10% of your daily calories.

GOOD FATS vs. BAD FATS



What the Numbers Mean for Adults

	Total cholesterol	HDL cholesterol	LDL cholesterol	Triglycerides
Good	Less than 200	40 or higher	Less than 100	Less than 149
Borderline	200–239	n/a	130–159	150–199
High	240 or higher	n/a	160 or higher	200 or higher
Low	n/a	less than 40	n/a	n/a

References:

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol>

<https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/about.htm>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-truth-about-fats-bad-and-good>

<https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterollevelswhatyouneedtoknow.html>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/high-cholesterol/levels-by-age#adults>



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