

National Cholesterol Education Month

What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. It's normal to have cholesterol. Cholesterol is an important part of a healthy body because it serves needed bodily functions. But too much cholesterol in the blood is a major risk for coronary heart disease and for stroke.

LDL and HDL Cholesterol: What's bad and what is good?

Cholesterol can't dissolve in the blood. It has to be transported to and from the cells by carriers called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, is known as "bad" cholesterol. High-density lipoprotein, or HDL, is known as "good" cholesterol.

LDL (Bad) Cholesterol

When too much LDL circulates in the blood, it can slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain. Together with other substances, it can form plaque, a thick, hard deposit that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, heart attack or stroke can result.

HDL (Good) Cholesterol

HDL is known as the "good" cholesterol, because high levels of HDL seem to protect against heart attack. Low levels of HDL's also increase the risk of heart disease. Medical experts think that HDL tend to carry cholesterol away from arteries and back to the liver, where it is passed from the body. Some experts think that HDL removes excess cholesterol from arterial plaque, thus slowing its buildup.

Triglycerides

Triglycerides is form of fat made by the body. Elevated triglycerides can be due to overweight/obesity, physical inactivity, cigarette smoking, excess alcohol consumption, and a diet very high in carbohydrates. People with high triglycerides often have a high total cholesterol level, including a high LDL level and a low HDL level.

High cholesterol is one of the major, controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke. As your blood cholesterol rises, so does your risk for coronary heart disease.

Cholesterol Question to ask your doctor:

- What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
- What is my cholesterol goal?
- How long will it take to reach my goal?
- How often should I have my levels checked?



High cholesterol
increases your risk.