

Over

2,000



Americans die of
cardiovascular disease each
day, an average of one death
every 40 seconds.

Cholesterol...the Good, the Bad, the Facts

Include 5-10 grams or more of soluble fiber a day to decrease your total and LDL cholesterol. Try ½ cup of cooked oatmeal to get 6 grams of soluble fiber.

Cholesterol is a fatty, waxy substance produced naturally in the liver. Your body needs small amounts of cholesterol to function normally. The bad news is—too much cholesterol can lead to heart disease. The good news—you can lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

LDL (bad) cholesterol

LDL cholesterol is called the bad cholesterol because it contributes to plaque, a hard deposit that can clog arteries. Narrowed arteries increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.

HDL (good) cholesterol

HDL cholesterol is called the good cholesterol because it helps reduce levels of LDL cholesterol. HDL acts as a scavenger, removing LDL cholesterol from the arteries and taking it back to the liver where it is broken down and passed from the body.

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are another type of fat in the body. High levels of triglycerides are associated with hardening of the arteries.

What should your numbers be?

Most doctors will recommend a fasting blood test called a lipoprotein profile. The charts below give an idea of where your numbers should be:

| Total Cholesterol | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Desirable | Less than 200 mg/dL |
| Borderline High | 200-239 mg/dL |
| At Risk | 240 mg/dL or higher |

| HDL levels | Men | Women |
|------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Desirable | 60 mg/dL or above | 60 mg/dL or above |
| At Risk | Less than 40 mg/dL | Less than 50 mg/dL |

How to get healthy numbers

If your numbers are high, your doctor may prescribe lifestyle changes and medication. Diet changes will impact your cholesterol levels. Although some fat is healthy, you need to limit:

- **Saturated fats**—like those found in meats, butters, cheeses, full-fat dairy products and some oils (palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil)
- **Trans fats**—like those found in margarines, store-bought cookies, crackers and cakes. Trans fats are bad because they not only raise your LDL levels but they also lower your HDL levels.

Add soluble fiber to your diet. Soluble fiber helps block the absorption of cholesterol and fats. Some sources of soluble fiber are:

- Oatmeal and oat bran cereals
- Bananas, peaches, apples, berries, oranges
- Lentils, beans such as black, kidney, white, and pinto

Read nutrition labels on food products

Nutrition labels are a valuable tool. You can use the label to easily identify calories, saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol and dietary fiber. Just because the front of the package says “low cholesterol” does not mean it’s good for you. Many low cholesterol foods contain high levels of saturated fat and/or trans fat—both of which raise bad cholesterol levels.

You can search this health topic and more by visiting carefirst.com/wellbeing. Once you register or log in, select Discover.

Sources:

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

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/home/ovc-20181871>

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/blood-cholesterol>