

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance, and some cholesterol is needed for your body to function normally. However, having too much bad cholesterol and not enough good cholesterol can cause plaque to build up on the walls of your arteries, putting you at elevated risk for heart disease and stroke. Since high bad cholesterol doesn't cause many symptoms, a great deal of people may not realize their levels are too high, underscoring the importance of getting cholesterol levels checked. Doctors recommend adults have their cholesterol levels screened every five years (sooner if you already have been diagnosed with high cholesterol). A blood test can determine your cholesterol levels. Controlling your weight, staying physically active and making healthful food choices can help lower bad cholesterol. For many people, however, heredity plays a role and even with lifestyle changes, their bad cholesterol may continue to be too high. In those cases, a doctor may prescribe medication to help reduce the bad cholesterol. Treating bad cholesterol When more than diet and exercise is needed to treat high cholesterol, most people are treated with a class of medications called statins. If the use of a statin by itself is not getting cholesterol under control,