

Do I need to worry about high cholesterol?

It depends. According to the American Heart Association, some factors can increase your risk of having high cholesterol and developing cardiovascular disease.

- ▶ **Lifestyle factors:** Unhealthy eating or a sedentary lifestyle.
- ▶ **Smoking**
- ▶ **High blood pressure**
- ▶ **Type 2 diabetes**
- ▶ **Chronic kidney disease**
- ▶ **Metabolic syndrome:** If you have 3 or more of the following conditions, you are at higher risk of a serious cardiovascular condition or event:
 - Low HDL (“good”) cholesterol levels
 - High blood sugar
 - High triglyceride levels
 - High blood pressure
 - Large waistline (extra fat in stomach area)
- ▶ **Family history of high cholesterol:** Some people have a condition that runs in their family where their LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels are high, even at younger ages.



Your doctor can order a blood test to check your cholesterol levels and **calculate your 10-year risk** of developing ASCVD.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Conversation Starters

- ▶ What’s my risk of a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years?
- ▶ How can I reduce my risk of cardiovascular disease?
- ▶ What foods should I eat to lower my cholesterol levels? What foods should I avoid?

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Cholesterol-Lowering Medications

- ▶ What are the pros and cons of taking cholesterol lowering medications?
- ▶ What are the side effects?
- ▶ How long do I need to stay on medication?
- ▶ What if I can’t afford the medication?

Scan the QR code on the right to access this and other resources!



A Spotlight On Cholesterol

- ▶ What you should know
- ▶ When to get your cholesterol levels checked
- ▶ How to manage high cholesterol
- ▶ What you can do to prevent cardiovascular disease, heart attack and stroke

Information gathered from the American Heart Association (AHA), Million Hearts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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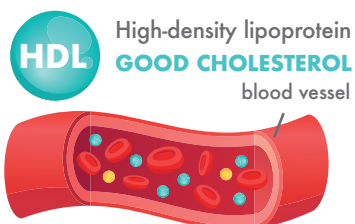
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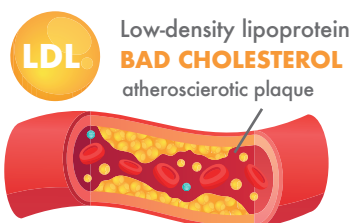
What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in your blood that is necessary to keep you healthy. But too much cholesterol in your blood can cause blocked arteries and blood clots. There are 2 types of cholesterol:

HDL (“good”) cholesterol helps remove bad LDL cholesterol and can reduce your risk of heart disease or stroke.



LDL (“bad”) cholesterol builds up in arteries and creates a thick substance called plaque, which can block blood flow or break off and travel to the heart or brain, causing heart attack or stroke.



American Heart Association (2022),
What is Cholesterol?

You can't feel the effects of high cholesterol until it's too late.

High levels of cholesterol can restrict blood flow and lead to **atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD)**, which can cause a stroke or heart attack, two of the leading causes of death.

High cholesterol is a silent killer
— there are no symptoms.

You won't know you have high cholesterol unless you get checked, and you can't feel cholesterol building up in your blood

Did you know...?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that high cholesterol **affects almost 2 out of every 5 adults**.

- ▶ After decades of progress, cardiovascular disease **rates are increasing**.
- ▶ ASCVD causes over **400,000 deaths** every year.
- ▶ People who are **South Asian** have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease than some groups.
- ▶ **Women and people of color** may be less likely to be diagnosed with high cholesterol.

Learn more about ASCVD with these resources.

- **American Heart Association:** Information about preventing cardiovascular disease and managing high cholesterol.
- **Live to the Beat Campaign:** A toolkit developed by Million Hearts and the CDC Foundation to empower Black adults to lead heart-healthy lifestyles on their own terms.
- **Take Health to Heart:** An initiative of the Foundation of the National Lipid Association and the National Medical Association to educate the public and advocate for policy change.

MANAGING HIGH CHOLESTEROL

You've been told you have high cholesterol. Now what?

Lifestyle Changes

The good news is that **you can make healthy lifestyle changes to reduce your risk** of a stroke or heart attack! Here are tips to get you started:

- Follow a heart-healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise.
- Stop smoking.
- Reduce stress.
- Get enough sleep.

These tips can also help prevent or manage other chronic conditions, such as kidney disease and type 2 diabetes!

Medication

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help reduce the harmful cholesterol in your blood. These **lifesaving tools can prevent a heart attack or stroke**. Medications may include statins, ezetimibe, bile acid sequestrants, PCSK9 inhibitors—or a combination of these.

You and your doctor can discuss which medication is best for you and your overall treatment plan and goals. To get on the right path, you might need to switch medications or change the dose a few times.

You will have several doctor visits and blood tests to check your cholesterol levels, especially in the first year or two of starting treatment.



NEVER stop taking your medication without talking to your doctor!

