

High Cholesterol and Heart Failure

What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that comes from your liver and from the food you eat. Your body needs it to function properly. There are two main types of cholesterol — HDL and LDL.

- High-density lipoprotein (lip o PRO teen), or HDL cholesterol, is considered the “good” cholesterol. It helps remove excess cholesterol from the body.
- Low-density lipoprotein, or LDL cholesterol, is considered the “bad” cholesterol. It leads to blockages of the arteries and to heart disease.

Why Is LDL Cholesterol Bad?

Even a very thin layer of LDL cholesterol can be bad for your blood vessels and arteries.

- The LDL cholesterol builds up plaque (PLAK) on the inside of your blood vessels and artery walls. This is much like the plaque that builds up on your teeth.
- Then, parts of the blood called platelets can stick to the plaque and block the vessels around your heart.
- These blockages can cause a heart attack and make your heart weak. Platelets can also block the arteries that lead to your brain and can cause a stroke.

High levels of LDL cholesterol, combined with other heart problems, can greatly increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.

What Causes a High LDL Cholesterol Level?

A high level of LDL cholesterol can result from foods you eat. It can also be caused when your body naturally makes more cholesterol than it needs.

Your body's tendency to make too much cholesterol may be inherited, but it also becomes more common as people get older. Even if you haven't had cholesterol problems before, your risk increases as you grow older.

How Can You Control Your LDL Cholesterol Level?

Fortunately, you can lower your LDL cholesterol level. By doing so, you can slow and even reverse cholesterol-related problems. Here are some ways you can lower your cholesterol.

Medications

In most cases, you can lower your cholesterol, at least in part, with medications. These medications help correct your body's tendency to make more cholesterol than it needs.

Medications called "statins" (STAT ins) can help reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and heart failure.

Diet

A healthy diet will help lower your LDL cholesterol. Medication alone cannot make up for a diet filled with too much bad cholesterol.

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How Can You Control Your LDL Cholesterol Level?
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Diet, continued

Here are some foods that you should eat if you want to keep your heart healthy.

Foods to Eat	Some Heart Healthy Choices
Fruits	Fresh, frozen, or dried fruit Fruit canned in its own juice
Vegetables	Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables Vegetables with no butter or cheese sauce
Grains	Brown rice Oatmeal Whole grain cereals Whole wheat and multi-grain breads Low-fat rye crackers and multi-grain crackers
Low-Fat Protein	Grilled, baked, or poached fish Skinless chicken and turkey Non-fat milk and milk products Low-fat yogurt Eggs (only 3 egg yolks a week) Grilled or roasted lean meats (round and sirloin steak, pork tenderloin and loin chops, ground round, veal, and leg of lamb)
Fats and Oils Low in Saturated Fat	Tub margarines Canola oil Olive oil Low-fat salad dressings Low-fat mayonnaise

Here are some foods you should avoid or eat very rarely.

Foods to Avoid	Some Unhealthy Choices for Your Heart
Fatty Meats	Poultry with skin Regular ground beef Bacon and sausage Prime rib T-bone and rib eye steak Liver Luncheon meats
Sweets and Snacks	Pastries and donuts Pies and cakes Ice cream Chocolate and candy (Some low-fat versions may be acceptable in limited amounts)

***How Can You
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continued***

Exercise

Exercise is key to a healthy heart and blood vessels. It helps blood vessels stay healthy by increasing good cholesterol (HDL). It also helps reduce diabetes and the effects of overeating, which are two problems that often add to cardiac risks.

Exercise such as walking, swimming, or even dancing helps you control your cholesterol levels. Try to exercise for at least 30 minutes three to five times a week. Ask your doctor about how to begin an exercise routine.

Alcohol Consumption

When you limit the amount of alcohol you drink, you help keep your heart strong and your body functions normal. While small amounts of alcohol may help your heart, it is best to limit how much you drink. The recommendation is:

- One drink per day if you are small (140 pounds or less)
- Two drinks a day if you are bigger

If you drink more, you will weaken your heart.

***Where Can You
Get Additional
Information?***

Information on a healthy heart diet can be found in most bookstores and on the American Heart Association Web site, www.americanheart.org.

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Glossary

Term	Pronunciation	Definition
Lipoprotein	lip o PRO teen	Compounds of protein that carry fats and fat-like substances, such as cholesterol, in the blood
Plaque	PLAK	A combination of cholesterol and lipids that can accumulate on the inside of arteries
Statins	STAT ins	A class of drugs that lowers cholesterol