



What Are High Blood Cholesterol and Triglycerides?



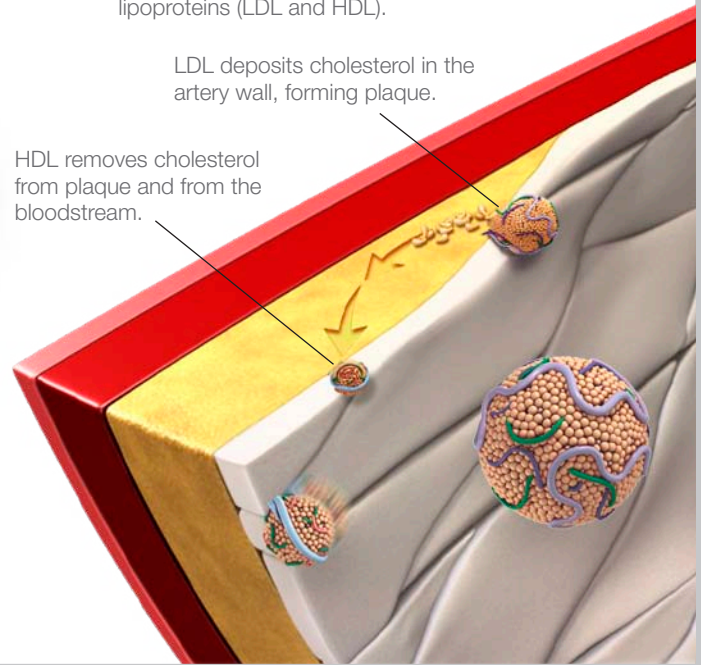
Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs.

The saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol you eat may raise your blood cholesterol level. Having too much cholesterol in your blood may lead to increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol travels to the body's cells through the bloodstream by way of lipoproteins (LDL and HDL).

LDL deposits cholesterol in the artery wall, forming plaque.

HDL removes cholesterol from plaque and from the bloodstream.



What's so bad about high blood cholesterol?

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol is often called "the bad kind." When you have too much LDL cholesterol in your blood, it can join with fats and other substances to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced. If this buildup of plaque ruptures, a blood clot may form at this location or a piece may break off and travel in the bloodstream. If a blood clot blocks the blood flow to your heart, it causes a heart attack. If a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol is called the "good kind." It carries harmful cholesterol away from the arteries and helps protect you from heart attack and stroke. It's better to have a lot of HDL cholesterol in your blood.

How can I lower the bad cholesterol in my blood?

- Cut down on foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol. These include fatty meats, organ meats such as liver, shellfish, cheese, whole-milk dairy products, egg yolks, and solid fats such as butter.

- Do moderate intensity physical activities, such as brisk walking, at least 30 minutes on most or all days for a total of at least 150 minutes each week.
- Eat more foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and high in fiber. Aim for about 25 grams of fiber each day. Be sure to include a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and grain products, beans, peas and legumes, fat-free and low-fat milk products, lean meats and poultry without skin, fatty fish, and nuts and seeds in limited amounts.
- Lose weight if you need to and maintain a healthy weight.
- If you can't control your cholesterol through lifestyle changes, ask your doctor about medicines that can reduce cholesterol.

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in your body. They come from food, and your body also makes them. High levels of blood triglycerides are often found in people who have high cholesterol levels, heart problems, are overweight or have diabetes.

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What about fats?

There are different kinds of fats in the foods we eat. Saturated fat raises blood cholesterol, so it's not good for you. Avoid animal fats like lard and meat fat, and some plant fats like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil.

- **Trans fat** comes from adding hydrogen to vegetable oils and tends to raise blood cholesterol. It's used in commercial baked goods and for cooking in many restaurants and fast-food chains. It's also found naturally in milk and beef.
- **Polyunsaturated fats** are found in vegetable oils and fish oils. These tend to lower blood cholesterol when eaten in moderation and used to replace saturated or trans fats.
- **Monounsaturated fats** are found in olive, canola, peanut, sunflower and safflower oils. In a low-saturated-fat diet, they may lower blood cholesterol.



You can help lower your LDL cholesterol by eating foods that are lower in saturated fat and cholesterol, and high in fiber. Aim for about 25 grams of fiber each day.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
- 3 For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?

How does exercise affect my levels?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!