



Five Tips to Help Manage Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a form of fat that is carried through the body in two kinds of bundles: LDL and HDL. It's important to have healthy levels of both.

- **LDL:** Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) can lead to too much cholesterol in the arteries. Some people call LDL “bad” cholesterol. The higher the LDL level in your blood, the higher your chances for heart disease.

Goal: under 100 mg/dl

- **HDL:** High-density lipoproteins (HDL) are also known as “good” cholesterol. HDL helps remove cholesterol from your body, so the higher your HDL, the lower your risk for heart disease.

Goal: over 40 mg/dl for men, over 50 mg/dl for women

Triglycerides are another kind of blood fat that can raise your risk for heart attack or stroke. Aim for triglycerides lower than 150 mg/dl. Your doctor may also give you a “total” cholesterol number. A good total cholesterol goal is less than 200 mg/dl.

It's a good idea to have your cholesterol checked every 5 years, or more often if there's a problem. If your levels are off, you're not alone; about one in three American adults has high LDL, or “bad” cholesterol.

Here are five tips to help you manage your cholesterol:

1. Eat Smart. One simple way to improve your cholesterol levels is to eat fewer unhealthy fats and high-cholesterol foods like egg yolks, fatty meats, butter, other high-fat dairy products, shortening, stick margarines, and processed snack foods like cookies and chips. You can also help your body absorb less bad cholesterol by eating foods that contain soluble fiber, such as oatmeal, kidney beans, lentils, yams and apples.

Other cholesterol-smart foods are salmon and other oily fish, nuts, and olive oil because they contain heart-healthy fats. Focus on eating more vegetables, whole grains and fruits than unhealthy snacks and sweets. Always check the “Nutrition Facts” labels on foods before you buy to see how they might help or hurt your cholesterol-lowering efforts.

2. Stay Active. You can raise your good cholesterol and lower the bad at the same time with exercise. To get this powerful benefit, exercise for 30 minutes a day at a moderate intensity, five days a week. You don't have to join a gym or buy expensive equipment -- walking briskly is actually a great way to get in your activity for the day. If the weather is bad, you can head to the mall or use the school gym for a space to walk. Biking, hiking, yard work, or heavy gardening also count! The key is to get your heart pumping.

If you haven't been active for a while, start slowly and work your way up. Take a brisk 10-minute walk around the block every day during your lunch break or after dinner. Or choose another time that works for you. Continue to add one lap each week until you're walking briskly for 30 minutes. If your schedule doesn't allow for a 30-minute block of exercise, split it up into three 10-minute periods to get the same benefits.



3. Drop a Few Pounds. Being overweight raises your bad cholesterol. At the same time, it lowers your good cholesterol. Eating smart and staying active will help you lose weight—and – dropping just a few pounds can raise your HDL. Maintaining a healthy weight will help you keep your cholesterol in balance.

4. Quit Smoking. It's no surprise that smoking lowers your good cholesterol. If you smoke, quitting can help your HDL jump as much as 10 percent. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can help. Options include the nicotine patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler or nasal spray. Prescription medicines are another option. Talk with your health care provider about which options are best for you. And visit SmokeFree.gov to learn more about how to quit.

5. Consider Cholesterol Medicines. Ask your doctor if medicines such as statins, fibrates and niacin can help you lower LDL while raising HDL levels.

Cholesterol is also affected by blood pressure and blood glucose. If your blood glucose and blood pressure are high, your cholesterol may be high too. All of these are risk factors for diabetes and heart disease. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. Talk to your doctor about whether you may be at higher risk for diabetes and heart disease. Then take steps to lower your risk so you can live a longer, healthier life.

For more information, visit www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES.