



Lifestyles for **Heart Disease**

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy material that is found throughout the body. Your body needs some cholesterol to work properly, but too much can stick to the walls of your arteries and block blood flow. High blood cholesterol has no symptoms, so many people are not aware they have a problem. In addition, cholesterol levels tend to rise as you get older, so it's important to know your cholesterol numbers. Keeping your cholesterol lower reduces your risk for heart disease and heart attack.

Take the test

A standard lipid blood test includes a measurement of total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides. You should avoid eating for 10 to 12 hours before this blood test; however, you can usually drink water and take your prescribed medicines during this time.

Here's what your results tell you:

Total cholesterol is the sum of all the types of cholesterol in your blood. Most treatment decisions are based on the level of LDL or HDL cholesterol, rather than the level of total cholesterol.

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is the bad cholesterol. It is the main source of damaging cholesterol buildup and artery blockage.

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is the good cholesterol. It carries cholesterol from other parts of the body back to the liver for removal. HDL prevents cholesterol buildup and blockage in the arteries.

Triglycerides are a form of fat in the blood stream. The body converts extra calories into triglycerides and stores them in fat cells and releases them later for energy. High triglycerides can be caused by being overweight or drinking too much alcohol. Medical conditions (such as diabetes or an under-active thyroid) or medications (such as estrogen therapy, thiazide diuretics and beta-blockers) can raise triglycerides.

Total Cholesterol	
Below 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200 to 239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	High

LDL Cholesterol	
Below 100 mg/dL	Optimal
100 to 129 mg/dL	Near optimal
130 to 159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160 to 189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very high

HDL Cholesterol	
Below 40 mg/dL	Poor
40 to 59 mg/dL	Better
60 mg/dL and above	Best

Triglycerides	
Below 150 mg/dL	Desirable
150 to 199 mg/dL	Borderline high
200 to 499 mg/dL	High
500 or above	Very high

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Lose some weight, find good health

If you're overweight, you probably have higher blood levels of cholesterol and triglycerides than you would otherwise. Subsequently, you are at a higher risk for heart disease. If you have an apple shape body — and carry the majority of your weight in your belly — you're at higher risk than if you were pear shaped and carried more weight in your hips and thighs. A waist measurement of more than 40 in men and 35 in women increases the risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Most of the fat that collects around your middle is visceral fat, which fills the space between the organs in your abdomen. It affects the hormones in your body and can slow down your body's response to insulin, causing diabetes. To reduce visceral fat, you need to lose weight by following a healthy diet and exercising daily. If you're overweight, even losing a little weight can help reduce LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and increase HDL cholesterol.

Physical activity can increase HDL (good) cholesterol and lower triglycerides and LDL (bad) cholesterol. This reduces the risk of heart disease, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress and improves overall fitness. To protect your heart, you need to do 30 minutes or more of a moderate-intense activity such as brisk walking five days a week. If 30 minutes is too much all at once, break it up into 10-minute periods. If you have been inactive, start slowly to increase your physical activity. Always check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Source: *Health A to Z*

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Choose a heart healthy diet

- **Reduce saturated fats and cholesterol.**

Animal products contain both, so limit beef, butter and whole milk dairy products. Avoid processed foods made with coconut, palm and hydrogenated oils.

- **Eat fish or try fish oil supplements.**

They reduce triglycerides, lower blood pressure, prevent blood clots and reduce irregular heartbeats. Try mackerel, lake trout, tuna or salmon.

- **Drink orange juice.**

It is high in flavonoids, and, according to recent studies, drinking approximately three glasses

of orange juice a day may increase HDL (good cholesterol) levels. Some orange juice products are also enriched with cholesterol-lowering fiber.

- **Try cholesterol-lowering margarines.**

They contain plant stanol or sterol esters and work by blocking the absorption of cholesterol in the intestines.

- **Cook with monounsaturated oils.**

Olive, canola and peanut oils have been shown to reduce total and LDL cholesterol levels.

- **Start the day with oatmeal.**

It contains soluble fiber, which helps lower LDL. Pick the old-fashioned or quick-cooking kind instead of instant. At least 25 to 30 grams of fiber per day is recommended.

- **Cut out coffee and soda pop.**

Switch to green tea, which has cholesterol-lowering properties. Try three to four cups of green tea a day.

- **Limit salt.**

Your intake of salt should be no more than 1 teaspoon a day. This includes the amount in processed foods, cooking additives and table usage.

- **Read labels carefully.**

Avoid baked goods, cookies, snacks and frozen foods, which are often loaded with unhealthy fats.

Source: *Health A to Z*

Staying healthy while eating fast foods

Your body needs some dietary fat for good health. Fats supply energy and essential fatty acids to maintain healthy skin and promote absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. But high levels of saturated fat and cholesterol can increase cholesterol levels and the risk for heart disease. Meals made outside the home tend to be higher in total and saturated fats than meals cooked at home. In response to customer demand for healthier menus, many fast food restaurants now offer healthy alternatives. Some ways to trim calories at a fast food restaurant are:

- Choose regular-size portions instead of super sizing.
- If eating an occasional hamburger, avoid extra items on your burger. Skip the sauce, cheese and bacon, and select lettuce, tomato and onion instead.
- Pick a salad with vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, peppers, onion, cauliflower, spinach and tomatoes. Ask for low-calorie or nonfat dressing.

- At a pizza restaurant, order the thin-crust pizza with vegetable toppings. Stay away from meat toppings and eat no more than one to two slices.
- Avoid fried foods such as chicken nuggets, french fries, onion rings and fried fish or fried chicken sandwiches. Order grilled chicken or fish and try a baked potato with veggies on top instead of fries.
- When eating Mexican fast food, pick the bean burrito, soft taco or chicken fajita. Limit refried beans, cheese, sour cream and guacamole.
- Drink nonfat milk or water instead of soda pop.
- Avoid high-fat condiments such as butter and mayonnaise. Select ketchup or mustard.

Source: *Health A to Z*

Go nuts!

If you like nuts, studies have shown that eating them can be good for you.

- Nuts lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and should be eaten as part of a heart-healthy diet.
- Nuts reduce your risk of blood clots that can cause a fatal heart attack.
- Nuts contain unsaturated fats such as Omega-3's, which help the heart.
- Nuts are high in vitamin E and fiber and are a good vegetarian source of protein.
- Nuts are great, but walnuts, in particular, contain the most Omega-3 fats.
- Nuts lose their health benefits when covered in salt, chocolate or sugar.
- Nuts are high in calories, so watch your portion size. Two ounces of nuts is recommended each day, but as little as 2 ounces a week produce health benefits.
- Nuts should replace less healthy snacks or foods.

Working nuts into your diet is easy.

- Add 2 tablespoons of nuts to yogurt or cereal in the morning.
- Sprinkle nuts on top of a salad instead of bacon bits or cheese.
- Eat a small handful of soynuts instead of chips.
- Mix nuts into quick breads or muffin mixes.
- Add cashews or slivered almonds to a stir-fry recipe.
- Put a tablespoon of natural peanut butter on celery or a sliced apple.

Source: *Health A to Z*

Aim for prevention

Control blood pressure

- Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Keep physically active.
- Follow a healthy diet low in sodium.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Take medication as prescribed.

Monitor blood cholesterol

- Get your blood cholesterol level checked once every five years (or more often if necessary).
- Learn what your numbers mean.
- Follow a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Take medication as prescribed.

Say no to smoking

- Stop smoking. People who smoke are up to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than nonsmokers, with the risk increasing with the number of cigarettes smoked each day. Contact BCN's Quit the Nic program at 800-811-1764 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday for help. TTY users should call 800-240-3050.
- Stay clear of secondhand smoke.

Don't wait to lose weight

- Lose extra weight. It makes your heart work harder.
- Try to lose weight slowly — only ½ to 1 pound a week.

Deal with diabetes

- Get your blood sugar checked by your doctor.
- Keep your blood sugar levels under control.
- Take meds as prescribed.

Fit in fitness

- Participate in regular physical activity.
- Make movement a part of your life.

Source: *Health A to Z*

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute





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