



MONITORING AND MANAGING CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fatty substance, also called a lipid, that's produced by the liver. It's found in foods high in saturated fat, like fatty meats, egg yolks, shellfish, and whole-milk dairy products. Moderate cholesterol levels in your blood are a vital part of the structure and functioning of our cells, but high levels of LDL cholesterol — low-density lipoproteins — can lead to a slow plaque buildup in the arteries over time, and serious progressive health problems.

There are three main components your doctor evaluates when you have a blood test to check your cholesterol levels. They are LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, and triglycerides.

Total cholesterol is the level of all of the lipids in your blood, both LDLs and HDLs. Generally, a lower total cholesterol level is better for your general health.

Whether you have high cholesterol may depend on your lifestyle. Eating too much fat and not getting enough exercise can cause cholesterol levels to rise. Cholesterol is also, in part, a result of genetics.

Everyone with high cholesterol needs to keep it under control, but it may be even more important for some groups of people, who have additional risk factors, such as:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Family history of early heart disease
- Obesity
- Smoking

If you fall into any of the groups above, you may be at increased risk for plaque buildup in your arteries. As plaque gradually builds, it can cause arteries to narrow.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO MANAGE MY CHOLESTEROL?

Managing high cholesterol varies for each of us, depending on our medical history and our general health. Physicians establish cholesterol goals for their patients based on a variety of factors, including cholesterol test results (also known as a fasting lipid profile), medical background, and many other variables.

It's important to keep your cholesterol levels within healthy limits. If you have other risk factors for developing heart disease, you need to be even more careful — especially with your LDL level. If you're considering a cholesterol-management plan, it's important to discuss all your risk factors with your doctor to develop a plan that works for you.

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