



managing your cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance needed for good health. There are two types of cholesterol: **blood cholesterol** that is made by your liver and **dietary cholesterol** that comes from food. Cholesterol is good because it performs many important jobs in your body (such as building cell walls and making hormones and tissues in the body).

› What are the risks of high cholesterol?

Too much cholesterol in the bloodstream can increase your risk of heart disease. Extra cholesterol may lead to a build-up of plaque on the walls of your arteries. Your arteries carry blood to your heart and other organs and this plaque build-up causes problems with how well they do their job.

- **LDL (bad) Cholesterol** carries cholesterol from the liver to other tissues. Along the way, it settles on the walls of arteries and other blood vessels. High levels of LDL are associated with an *increased* risk of heart disease.
- **HDL (good) Cholesterol** carries cholesterol from every part of the body, bringing it back to the liver for disposal. High levels of HDL-blood cholesterol are associated with a *decreased* risk of heart disease.
- **Total Cholesterol** is a measurement of all the different types of cholesterol in your bloodstream.
- **Triglycerides** are a type of fat made in the liver that circulates in the blood with other fats. High triglyceride levels are a risk factor for some diseases, including heart disease.

› Types of fat

To maintain a healthy diet, be aware of the amount and type of fat you eat.

- **Saturated fats** are generally solid at room temperature and occur naturally in nearly all fatty foods. Examples: meats, dairy products, butter, lard, and tropical oils like palm and coconut.
- **Trans-fats** are typically created when manufacturers turn liquid oils into more solid fats like shortening and margarine. If partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated are listed in the ingredients, it most likely includes manufactured trans-fats. Examples: processed foods such as cookies, cakes, crackers and snack foods.
- **Unsaturated fats** include polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats and are mainly found in vegetables and some seafood. Unsaturated fats are the best type of fat

to choose for good heart health. Examples: canola and olive oil, nuts, flaxseed, and fatty fish, like salmon.

- **Dietary Cholesterol** comes from “animal products.” Total intake of fat and saturated fat increases cholesterol levels two to three times more than the amount of dietary cholesterol in foods. Examples: eggs, meat, poultry, fish, seafood, butter, cheese, whole milk and cream.

› Ways to increase healthy (unsaturated) fats:

- Add unsalted nuts to your salad, yogurt and other snacks
- Eat fish two to three times per week
- Sauté vegetables and lean meat in olive oil instead of butter or margarine
- Use peanut butter (or other nut butters) to top whole wheat toast or fruit as a snack

› Lifestyle steps to lower cholesterol

- **Maintain a healthy weight** – a healthy weight will limit your chance of serious heart disease.
- **Be physically active daily** – maintain an active lifestyle and try to get aerobic activity (exercise that raises your heart rate) on most days of the week to help raise your HDL and lower your LDL cholesterol.
- **Add more soluble fiber** – All types of fiber are good to add to your diet, but soluble fiber is the best choice to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Good sources include: oats, beans, barley, sweet potatoes and broccoli.
- **Add more Omega-3's (a healthy fat)** – Eat seafood or “fatty” fish (salmon, trout, herring, sardines, oysters, mackerel, flounder, tuna, scallops) two to five times a week. Other examples include: walnuts, soybeans, flaxseed, canola oil, olive oil and walnut oil.