



1. What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol (ko-les-ter-ol) is a soft waxy fat naturally found in the body. Cholesterol is important for keeping the body’s cells healthy and for making hormones. There are two types of cholesterol– LDL and HDL.

- LDL (Low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is “bad” cholesterol. When too much of it circulates in the blood, it can clog arteries, increasing a person’s risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke.
- HDL (High-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is “good” cholesterol. High levels of HDL carry cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it's removed from the body.

2. How do you get cholesterol?

Cholesterol comes from two sources:

- 75 percent of the blood’s cholesterol is made by your liver and other cells in your body.
- 25 percent comes from foods you eat (meat, milk, eggs, or any animal products).

You are at a greater risk of getting cholesterol if you have a family history of high cholesterol or other risk factors (i.e smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure or obesity).

3. How do you know if you have cholesterol?

Cholesterol can slowly build up in the blood over time without any symptoms. Have your cholesterol tested by your doctor at least every five years. Your doctor may suggest you get tested more often if your results are not within normal limits or if you have greater risk factors

Where should cholesterol levels be?

	Normal	Borderline	High
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dl	200-239 mg/dl	Over 240 mg/dl
LDL	Less than 100-130 mg/dl	130-159 mg/dl	Over 160mg/dl
HDL	Men: over 45mg/dl Women: over 55 mg/dl	40 mg/dl	Below 40 mg/dl
Triglyceride	Less than 150 mg/dl	150-159 mg/dl	Over 200 mg/dl

4. How is cholesterol treated?

In many patients, high cholesterol can be treated with lifestyle changes such as diet, exercise, and weight loss. But sometimes diet and exercise alone are not enough to reduce cholesterol. In these cases, doctors may prescribe medications.

5. How can cholesterol be prevented?

- Eat a healthy diet which includes:
 - ◆ **More** fruits and vegetables.
 - ◆ **More** high fiber foods (i.e. whole grain products).
 - ◆ **More** foods with omega 3 fatty acids (i.e. fish, nuts and seeds).
 - ◆ **More** *unsaturated fats* (i.e. canola and vegetable oils, reduced fat dairy products).
 - ◆ **Less** *saturated fats* (i.e. fatty meats, lard, butter and whole milk products).
- Limit cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg/day.
- Control your weight.
- Increase physical activity to at least 30 minutes per day.
- Avoid smoking.
- Don't have more than one alcoholic drink per day.
- Schedule regular cholesterol screenings as recommended by your doctor.
- Take prescribed medications.
- Learn stress management techniques, such as yoga.

Sources

1. *Cholesterol*. American Heart Association. <http://www.americanheart.org/>
2. *High Blood Cholesterol*. National Heart Blood and Lung Institute (NHLBI). <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/>
3. *High Blood Cholesterol*. Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-cholesterol/>

For additional resources, please visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.