

Preventing High Cholesterol

By living a healthy lifestyle, you can help keep your cholesterol in a healthy range and lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Make Healthy Eating Choices

Your body makes all of the cholesterol it needs, so you do not need to obtain cholesterol through foods. Eating lots of foods high in saturated fat and trans fat may contribute to high cholesterol and related conditions, such as heart disease.

What you can do:

- Limit foods high in saturated fat. Saturated fats come from animal products (such as cheese, fatty meats, and dairy desserts) and tropical oils (such as palm oil). Foods that are higher in saturated fat may be high in cholesterol.
- Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium (salt), and added sugars. These foods include lean meats; seafood; fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt; whole grains; and fruits and vegetables.
- Eat foods naturally high in fiber, such as oatmeal and beans (black, pinto, kidney, lima, and others) and unsaturated fats, which can be found in avocado, vegetable oils like olive oil, and nuts). These foods may help prevent and manage high levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or “bad”) cholesterol and triglycerides while increasing high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or “good”) cholesterol levels.
- Learn more about healthy diet and nutrition at CDC’s [Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program website](#).
- Find healthy, seasonal recipes at the [Million Hearts® Healthy Recipes page](#) [↗](#).

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Overweight and obesity raise levels of LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. Excess body fat affects how your body uses cholesterol and slows down your body’s ability to remove LDL cholesterol from your blood. The combination raises your risk of heart disease and stroke.

What you can do:

- To determine whether your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often calculate your body mass index (BMI). If you know your weight and height, you can [calculate your BMI at CDC’s Assessing Your Weight website](#). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure excess body fat.
- Talk to your doctor about what a healthy weight is for you.
- Work with your doctor on a food and fitness plan to help you reach or maintain a healthy weight.



Overweight and obesity raise levels of LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. Reaching a healthy weight can help lower your cholesterol levels.

Get Regular Physical Activity

Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

What you can do:

- Get active as a family. For adults, the Surgeon General recommends 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking or bicycling, every week. Children and adolescents should get 1 hour of physical activity every day.
- Make physical activity a part of each day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park a little farther away, walk to the store, or do jumping jacks during commercials.
- Learn more and get more tips at [CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity website](#).

Quit Smoking

Smoking damages your blood vessels, speeds up the [hardening of the arteries](#), and greatly increases your risk for heart disease. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease.

What you can do:

- Talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit.
- Learn more about tobacco use and ways to quit at [CDC's Smoking & Tobacco Use website](#).

Limit Alcohol

Too much alcohol can raise cholesterol levels and the levels of [triglycerides](#), a type of fat in the blood.

What you can do:

- Avoid drinking too much alcohol. Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one.
- Learn more at [CDC's Alcohol and Public Health website](#).

More Information

From CDC:

- [Heart Disease](#)
- [Stroke](#)
- [Aortic Aneurysm](#)
- [High Blood Pressure](#)

From Others:

- [Cholesterol](#)  —American Heart Association
- [Cut Down on Saturated Fats](#)  [PDF - 754 KB]  —U.S. Department of Agriculture
- [Fats and Cholesterol](#)  —U.S. Department of Agriculture

- [High Blood Cholesterol: What You Need to Know](#)  —National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
- [How to Build a Healthy Eating Pattern](#)  [PDF – 493 KB]  —U.S. Department of Agriculture
- [The Skinny on Fats](#)  —American Heart Association
- [Your Guide to Lowering Your Cholesterol With TLC](#)  [PDF – 1.7 MB]  —National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute