



How Can I Lower High Cholesterol?

Too much cholesterol in the blood can lead to heart disease and stroke — America's No. 1 and No. 4 killers.

You can reduce your cholesterol by eating healthful foods, losing weight if you need to and being physically active. Some people also need to take medicine because changing their diet isn't enough. Your doctor and nurses will help you set up a plan for reducing your cholesterol — and keeping yourself healthy!

Most heart and blood vessel disease is caused by a buildup of cholesterol, plaque and other fatty deposits in artery walls. The arteries that feed the heart can become so clogged that the blood flow is reduced, causing chest pain. If a blood clot forms and blocks the artery, a heart attack can occur. Similarly, if a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.



Cholesterol can join with fats and other substances in your blood to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced.

What should I eat?

Focus on low-saturated-fat, trans fat-free, low-cholesterol foods such as these:

- A variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables (4 to 5 servings of each per day)
- A variety of fiber-rich grain products like whole grain bread, cereal, pasta and brown rice. (6 to 8 servings per day with at least half of the servings whole grains)
- Fat-free, 1 percent and low-fat milk products (2 to 3 servings per day)
- Lean meats and poultry without skin (choose up to 5 to 6 total ounces per day)
- Fatty fish (enjoy at least 2 servings baked or grilled each week)
- Nuts, seeds, and legumes (dried beans or peas) in limited amounts (4 to 5 servings per week)

- Unsaturated vegetable oils like canola, corn, olive, safflower and soybean oils (but a limited amount of tub or liquid unsalted margarines and spreads made from them)

What should I limit?

- Whole milk, cream and ice cream
- Butter, egg yolks and cheese — and foods made with them
- Organ meats like liver, sweetbreads, kidney and brain
- High-fat processed meats like sausage, bologna, salami and hot dogs
- Fatty meats that aren't trimmed
- Duck and goose meat (raised for market)
- Bakery goods made with egg yolks, saturated fats and trans fats.

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- Saturated oils like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil
- Solid fats like shortening, partially hydrogenated margarine and lard
- Fried foods

What are some cooking tips for me?

- Use a rack to drain off fat when you broil, roast or bake.
- Don't baste with drippings; use wine, fruit juice or marinade.
- Broil or grill instead of pan-frying.
- Cut off all visible fat from meat before cooking, and take all the skin off poultry pieces. (If you're roasting a whole chicken or turkey, remove the skin after cooking.)
- Use a vegetable oil spray to brown or sauté foods.
- Serve smaller portions of higher-fat dishes, and serve bigger portions of lower-fat dishes like pasta, rice, beans and vegetables.



- Make recipes or egg dishes with egg whites or egg substitutes, not yolks.
- Instead of regular cheese, use low-fat, low-sodium cottage cheese and other fat-free or low-fat, low-sodium cheeses.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

What about eating out?

Why are weight control and physical activity important?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/answersbyheart to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!

