

All About Cholesterol

Managing your cholesterol and other blood fats (also called blood lipids) can help you prevent health problems.

There are several kinds of fats in your blood.

- **LDL cholesterol** is sometimes called “bad” cholesterol. It can narrow or block your blood vessels. Blocked vessels can lead to a heart attack or a stroke.
- **HDL cholesterol** is sometimes called “good” cholesterol. It helps remove deposits from the insides of your blood vessels and keeps your blood vessels from getting blocked.
- **Triglycerides** are another kind of fat. High triglycerides raise your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Cholesterol is also affected by blood pressure and blood glucose (sugar). If your blood glucose and blood pressure are high, it’s likely that your cholesterol may be off. All of these are risk factors for diabetes, heart attack and stroke. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. Talk to your health care provider about whether you may be at higher risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

What treatments are recommended?

Both lifestyle changes and medicines help control blood fats. Treatment differs from one person to the next. Some people can manage their blood lipids with lifestyle changes like healthy eating and physical activity. Most people need lifestyle changes plus medicines. Work with your health care provider to find a treatment that’s right for you.

What steps can you take?

Here are some ways to improve your blood fats. Place a check mark next to steps you’re willing to try. Ask your health care provider for more information.

- If you smoke or use e-cigarettes, quit.
- Lose weight if needed.



Eating healthy, being active, and taking medicine can help manage cholesterol.

- Exercise most days of the week. Brisk walking for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week is a good goal.
- Switch to a diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol.
- Your health care provider may also prescribe cholesterol-lowering medicine.

Medicines

Statins are a type of medicine to manage blood fats. They help lower LDL cholesterol. They also help lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

Adults with diabetes who are less than 40 years old should take a statin if they also have other risks for heart attack or stroke, such as high blood pressure or high LDL cholesterol. Most adults with diabetes who are 40 or older should be taking a statin.

There are also other medicines that improve blood lipids. Talk to your health care provider about whether you should take a statin or other drugs to reduce your risk for heart attack or stroke.