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High Blood Cholesterol Levels

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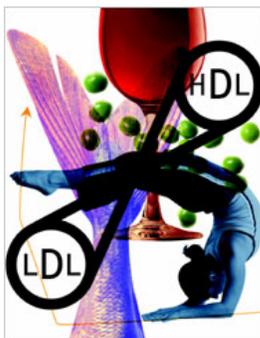
Questions for Your Doctor

Clinical Trials

Cholesterol is a fat (also called a lipid) that your body needs to work properly. Too much bad cholesterol can increase your chance of getting heart disease, stroke, and other problems.

The medical term for high blood cholesterol is lipid disorder, hyperlipidemia, or hypercholesterolemia.

Recent findings and perspectives on medical research.



REPORTER'S FILE

Cutting Cholesterol, an Uphill Battle

By JANE E. BRODY
 Dozens of measures, individually or together, can help to lower cholesterol. See what worked for one Times reporter.

EXPERT Q & A

The Highs and Lows of Cholesterol

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

What to Ask About Cholesterol

CLINICAL TRIALS

Selected Studies: Cholesterol

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Patient Information

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME

DOB: 03/01/1952 Age: 56

Gender: M Fasting: Y

Phone: 800-555-1212

[Interactive Graphic](#)

A Look at Blood Counts and What They Mean

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Find the safest and most cost-effective drugs for this condition.

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Web Links

- [National Cholesterol Education Program](#)
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- Triglyceride Level
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- Acute Kidney Failure
- Overweight
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Stroke

Alternative Names

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Lipid disorders; Hyperlipoproteinemia; Hyperlipidemia; Dyslipidemia; Hypercholesterolemia

Causes

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There are many types of cholesterol. The ones talked about most are:

- Total cholesterol - all the cholesterols combined
- High density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol - often called "good" cholesterol
- Low density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol - often called "bad" cholesterol

For many people, abnormal cholesterol levels are partly due to an unhealthy lifestyle. This often includes [eating a diet that is high in fat](#). Other lifestyle factors are:

- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise

Some health conditions can also lead to abnormal cholesterol, including:

- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Pregnancy and other conditions that increase levels of female hormones
- Underactive thyroid gland

Medicines such as certain birth control pills, diuretics (water pills), beta-blockers, and some medicines used to treat depression may also raise cholesterol levels. Several disorders that are passed down through families lead to abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels. They include:

- Familial combined hyperlipidemia
- Familial dysbetalipoproteinemia
- Familial hypercholesterolemia
- Familial hypertriglyceridemia

Smoking does not cause higher cholesterol levels, but it can reduce your HDL ("good") cholesterol.

Treatment »

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Steps you can take to improve their cholesterol levels, and help prevent heart disease and a heart attack include:

- Quit smoking. This is the single biggest change you can make to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. Eat foods that are naturally low in fat. These include whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- Use low-fat toppings, sauces, and dressings.
- Avoid foods that are high in saturated fat.
- Exercise regularly
- Lose weight if you are overweight

Your doctor may want you to take medicine for your cholesterol if lifestyle changes do not work. This will depend on:

- Your age
- Whether or not you have heart disease, diabetes, or other blood flow problems
- Whether you smoke or are overweight
- Whether you have high blood pressure or diabetes

You are more likely to need medicine to lower your cholesterol:

- If you have heart disease or diabetes, your LDL cholesterol should stay below 100 mg/dL



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If you are at risk for heart disease (even if you do not yet have any heart problems), your LDL cholesterol should be below 130 mg/dL

Almost everyone else may get health benefits from LDL cholesterol that is lower than 160 mg/dL to 190 mg/dL

There are several types of drugs to help lower blood cholesterol levels. The drugs work in different ways. Statins are one kind of drug that lower cholesterol and are the most effective at reducing the chance of heart disease.

[In-Depth Treatment »](#)

References

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Review Date: 5/14/2013

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