

# Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is normally found in the human body. Diet or genetic makeup can cause cholesterol levels to increase.

## When is blood cholesterol too high?

When it is greater than 250 mg/dl. Between 200 and 250 mg/dl it is considered too high in people with other risk factors such as diabetes, smoking or high blood pressure, as it increases the risk for heart and circulatory disease.

Your doctor will take into account HDL ("good") and LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Anyone who has had a heart attack must keep their LDL cholesterol at very low levels.

## What can you do if you have high cholesterol?

Eat a healthy diet, rich in fruit, vegetables, beans, fish, bread, rice and cereals (preferably whole grain).



Lower your intake of saturated fats: meat (especially beef, pork and fatty cold meats), whole milk and dairy products (margarine, cream, ice cream, mature cheeses) and coconut and palm oil, which are extensively used in mass-produced baked goods and foods. You shouldn't eat more than one egg yolk a day or 3 per week. Avoid drinking too much alcohol.

On the other hand, fish oil, raw nuts and olive oil (which is the best both for cooking and for dressing salads) are recommended.

Exercise regularly: spend 30 minutes cycling, walking, swimming, dancing, gardening or doing any other activity appropriate for your age, at least 5 times a week.



Lose weight.



Quit smoking.



Keep diabetes and high blood pressure under control.

All these things will help to control your cholesterol and to improve your health.

## When is medication necessary?

Sometimes cholesterol levels remain high despite diet and exercise and drugs are needed to lower them. In most cases, once you begin taking them, you'll most likely be on them for the rest of your life.