**Cholesterol** is a waxy substance in the blood made by the liver. Some cholesterol is needed for you to stay healthy, but when there’s too much in the blood, it can build up on the walls of blood vessels.

You may feel fine, even if you have high cholesterol. Over time, high cholesterol puts you at risk for heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

### Managing Cholesterol

**Cholesterol Testing**

Cholesterol can be checked with a simple blood test at your physician’s office, health fair, pharmacy or other location. A small blood sample is taken from your finger or arm. Depending on the type of test, you may need to avoid eating for several hours beforehand.

You should have your cholesterol checked as often as your physician or health care provider recommends. This may be every five years or more often, depending on your overall health.

**Healthy Targets:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Cholesterol</td>
<td>200 or lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL</td>
<td>40 or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDL</td>
<td>Lower than 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides</td>
<td>Lower than 150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your Cholesterol Test Results**

**Total Cholesterol:** This number is the total amount of cholesterol in your blood. The higher the number, the more likely it is that cholesterol is affecting your health.

- **HDL:** Known as the “good” cholesterol, HDL carries excess cholesterol out of the blood
- **LDL:** Known as the “bad” cholesterol, it can stick to blood vessel walls, reducing or blocking blood flow
- **Triglycerides:** These are a type of fat in the blood. When needed, your body uses triglycerides for energy
Choosing Between Fats

Healthier Fats

Monounsaturated fats lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Mostly found in vegetable oils such as olive, canola and peanut oils, monounsaturated fats are also in avocados and some nuts.

Polyunsaturated fats lower total and LDL (bad) cholesterol. They are mostly found in vegetable oils such as corn, safflower and soybean oils. These fats are also found in some seeds, nuts and fish.

Unhealthy Fats

Saturated fats raise total and LDL (bad) cholesterol. These fats are in animal products such as meat, poultry, milk, lard and butter. They’re also found in coconut and palm oils.

Trans fats raise LDL (bad) cholesterol. Trans fats are in hydrogenated oils and are found in processed foods such as cookies, crackers and some types of margarine. Note: No trans fat means less than 0.5 grams trans fat per serving, even though hydrogenated oil is listed in the ingredients.

Start Eating Healthier

When shopping, compare food labels for low-fat, low-cholesterol choices. Buy fresh foods when you can. When eating out, check the menu for low-fat or heart-healthy options. Ask for dishes to be made with less fat. Order salad dressings on the side.

Choose:

- White-meat chicken and turkey without the skin
- Egg whites or egg substitutes
- Fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products
- Whole-grain oatmeal flavored with fresh fruit
- Fresh fruit and veggies with low-fat dressing or hummus

Avoid:

- Red meats, especially high-fat cuts and organ meats
- Whole eggs with yolks
- Whole milk
- Packaged oatmeal flavored with sugar and salt
- Potato chips and dip

Cook in Healthier Ways

- Steam, microwave, broil, grill or bake food. Avoid frying
- Use nonstick sprays or cookware instead of butter or margarine
- Choose skinless chicken, turkey and fish. Trim extra fat before cooking
- Use olive or canola oil instead of lard, butter, margarine or shortening
- Replace each egg in a recipe with two egg whites
- Try fat-free, butter-flavored powders instead of butter
- Use reduced-fat salad dressings and mayonnaise

Medication for High Cholesterol

Healthy eating and exercising are excellent ways to lower cholesterol. However, you may need something more. Your physician may describe medication, which you should take just as prescribed.

- Follow the directions on when and how often to take the medication
- Tell your physician about any other medications, herbs or supplements you are taking now
- Remember to take your medication. Don’t skip a dose, even if your cholesterol goes down
- Take your medication with a glass of water. Ask if your medication needs to be taken with food
- Call your physician if you have side effects. You should never stop taking your medication without your physician’s approval