

# What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in the walls of human cells. The human body produces cholesterol.



## Foods increase cholesterol levels

Foods that are high in animal fats such as eggs, cheese, and meat add to the naturally-produced cholesterol in the human body.

Over time, a buildup of extra cholesterol or plaque inside blood vessels narrows vascular passageways. Once hardened, this plaque is referred to as hardening of the arteries or atherosclerosis. This condition can lead to:

- a stroke when there is a blocked blood vessel to the brain
- a heart attack when there is a blocked blood vessel to the heart.



## Is cholesterol good or bad?

Good cholesterol or high density lipoprotein (HDL) helps keep arteries from becoming blocked.

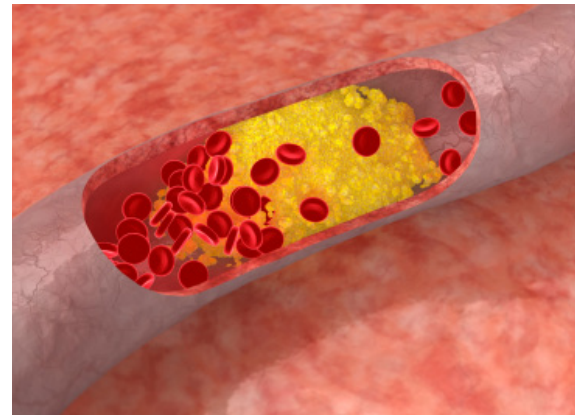
Low density lipoprotein (LDL) is known as bad cholesterol. LDL causes buildup and blockages in arteries.

Another factor to monitor is the level of triglycerides. These are fats produced in the liver. Triglycerides should remain at a normal level to decrease the risk of vascular disease.



## Cholesterol guideline levels

- Total cholesterol should be less than 200.
- Good cholesterol (HDL) should be more than 60.
- Bad cholesterol (LDL) should be less than 130.
- Triglycerides should be less than 150.



*Cholesterol build-up in artery*



## What are the risk factors for vascular disease?

- Age - men more than 45 years-of-age and women more than 55 years-of-age
- Family history - a father or brother diagnosed before age 55; a mother or sister diagnosed before age 65.



## Additional vascular disease risk factors

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Overweight / obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Diabetes



## Can lifestyle changes impact cholesterol levels?

Yes. Even slight lifestyle choices can impact vascular disease. For example, a 10-pound weight loss can result in a five to eight percent reduction in LDL.

Please call with any questions:

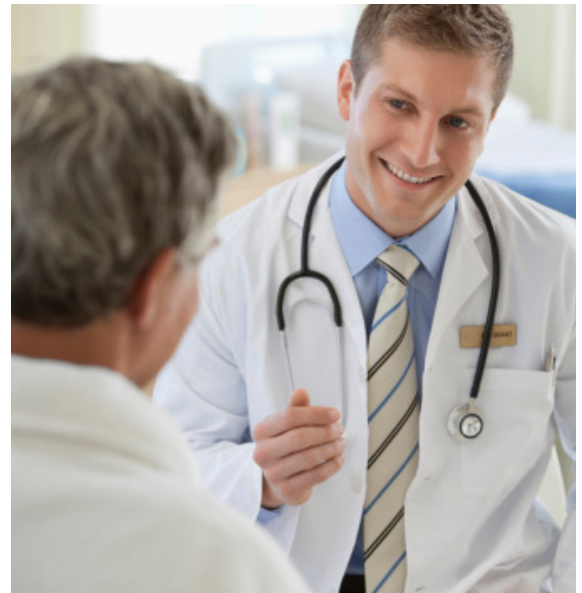
### Positive lifestyle changes

- Quit smoking
- Exercise at least 30 minutes daily
- Reduce caloric intake - women should have 1000 to 1200 calories per day; men should have 1200 to 1600 calories per day - to maintain a healthy body weight.

### What if lifestyle changes aren't enough?

Total cholesterol levels that are borderline high (between 150-199 mg /dL) or high (200 mg / dL or more) may require treatment. Prescription medications are available to help lower cholesterol and prevent heart attack and stroke.

Vascular surgeons are the only physicians treating vascular disease today who can perform all treatment options available, including medical management, minimally invasive endovascular procedures including balloon angioplasty, atherectomy, and stent procedures, and open surgical repair including bypass.



Only when you see a vascular surgeon who offers all treatment modalities will you be assured of receiving the care that is most appropriate to your condition.

**Please call with any questions:**

For more information visit [VascularWeb.org](http://VascularWeb.org)