

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a natural substance found in animal foods and also is made by our liver. High blood cholesterol may be partly due to genetics. It may also be a result of being overweight and eating food high in saturated fat and low in dietary fiber. If left untreated, poor blood flow may result and cause sudden heart attacks and strokes. High cholesterol can be “treated” by food, physical activity, and/or diet.

What are the “good” and “bad” cholesterol?

HDL= Healthy or “good”. HDL particles help remove cholesterol from the arteries and helps return cholesterol to the liver.

LDL= Lousy or “bad”. LDL can stay in blood vessels over time and lead to atherosclerosis (narrowing of the arteries due to fat deposits in the blood vessels). Studies have shown that high levels of LDL cholesterol are linked to a greater risk for stroke and heart attacks.

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat made by the body or from fats eaten in foods. High triglyceride levels in the blood can lead to heart disease and early heart attacks

What should my child’s cholesterol be?

Measurement	Optimal	Borderline	High
Total cholesterol	<170 mg/dl	170-199 mg/dl	>200 mg/dl
LDL cholesterol	<110 mg/dl	110-129 mg/dl	≥ 130 mg/dl
HDL cholesterol	≥ 35 mg/dl		
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dl		

What can I do to help my child achieve normal cholesterol and triglyceride levels?

- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Excess body weight is linked with high cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides, diabetes, and higher risk of heart disease and early death.
- Eat foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans fat
 - Limit your intake of saturated fat. Eat less fried foods and foods seasoned with fat
 - Use non-fat, and low fat dairy products. Limit coconut and palm kernel oils
 - Avoid foods with trans fatty acids like hard margarines. Look for margarines like Benecol and Promise Activ.
 - Limit French fries. Try a baked or sweet potato instead.
 - Eat higher fiber foods, fruits and vegetables
 - Eat more fish like water-packed light tuna, canned salmon, and shrimp up to 12 oz/wk. Eat skinless chicken.
 - Choose lean beef (90-95% lean) for making hamburgers, and low fat or nonfat hot dogs. Eat these foods less often
 - Eat take out pizza less often- You can make pizza with low fat cheeses and add veggies instead of meat
 - Choose the Winner’s Circle foods at school and when eating out.
 - Be physically active most days of the week for at least 60 minutes. Even mild yet regular exercise has been shown to raise HDL cholesterol levels and lower triglycerides. This works even better while achieving and maintaining a healthy weight with low fat, high fiber foods.