

## Why National Cholesterol Education Month is Important

### 1. It shines a light on a silent condition

High cholesterol has no symptoms itself, but it can lead to blockages of the arteries resulting in heart disease. National Cholesterol Education Month raises awareness about this potentially dangerous condition.

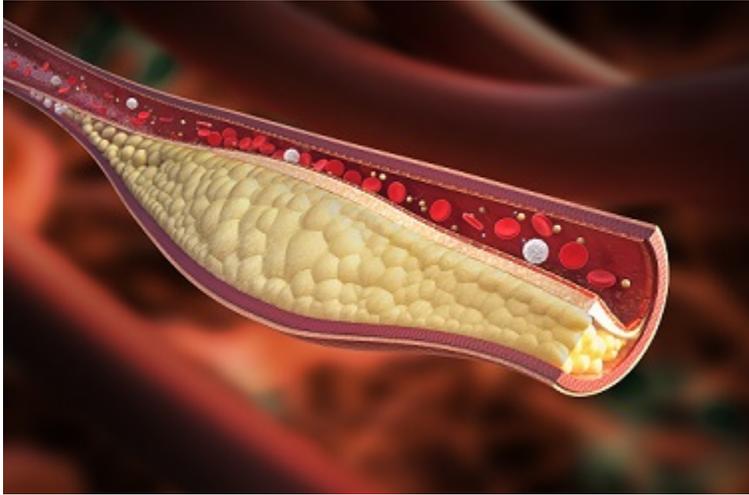
### 2. It urges people to get checked

A simple blood test can tell you if your cholesterol is high and if you're in danger of heart disease. Since there are no symptoms for high cholesterol, adults over the age of 20 are encouraged to get this test once every five years.

### 3. It galvanizes people to make healthier choices

High cholesterol can often be caused by one's lifestyle habits. Poor diet, a lack of exercise, and other factors like smoking can cause or exacerbate the condition. Luckily, improving one's lifestyle choices can also help lower cholesterol and National Cholesterol Education Month teaches people just how to do that.

# What Is Cholesterol?



Cholesterol is a dense, fatty substance found in every cell of your body.

Produced by your liver, cholesterol is essential to many life-sustaining functions. It helps your body make hormones and [vitamin D](#), and it's also found in compounds — such as bile — that your body creates to help you digest food.

Cholesterol circulates throughout your bloodstream in small bundles called lipoproteins. The interior of these bundles is composed of fat, while proteins form the exterior wall.

There are two major types of lipoproteins:

**High-density lipoprotein (HDL):** [HDL](#) is the "good" kind of cholesterol, because it helps reduce LDL levels.

The role of HDL is to transport [LDL cholesterol](#) to your liver, which removes it from your blood.

**Low-density lipoprotein (LDL):** Considered cholesterol's "bad" form, [LDL](#) enables cholesterol to create deposits (plaque) that build up and harden on the walls of blood vessels — a condition called [atherosclerosis](#) (commonly known as "hardening of the arteries").

When this happens in the coronary arteries (the arteries that serve your heart), it reduces your heart's supply of oxygen-rich blood. This serious condition, called [coronary artery disease](#), can cause heart attacks and even death.

Plaques can also form on the arteries that supply blood to your brain, abdomen, arms, and legs, leading to a higher risk of stroke, intestinal damage, and peripheral arterial disease.

## What Are Triglycerides and Why Do They Matter?

[Triglycerides](#) are another form of blood fat similar to cholesterol.

Having high [triglyceride levels](#) increases your [risk of heart disease](#), stroke, and heart attack.

Making healthy lifestyle choices can go a long way toward controlling your triglyceride levels.

Many factors help determine whether your LDL-cholesterol level is high or low. The following factors are the most important:

**Heredity.** Your genes influence how high your LDL ("bad") cholesterol is by affecting how fast LDL is made and removed from the blood. One specific form of [inherited high cholesterol](#) that affects 1 in 500 people is familial hypercholesterolemia, which often leads to early heart disease. But even if you do not have a specific genetic form of [high cholesterol](#), genes play a role in influencing your LDL-cholesterol level.

**What you eat.** Two main nutrients in the foods you eat make your LDL ("bad") cholesterol level go up: saturated fat, a type of fat found mostly in foods that come from animals; and cholesterol, which comes only from animal products. Saturated fat raises your LDL-cholesterol level more than anything else in the [diet](#). Eating too much saturated fat and cholesterol is the main reason for high levels of cholesterol and a high rate of [heart attacks](#) in the United States. Reducing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you eat is a very important step in reducing your blood [cholesterol levels](#). For more, please visit the [Nutrition](#) Center.

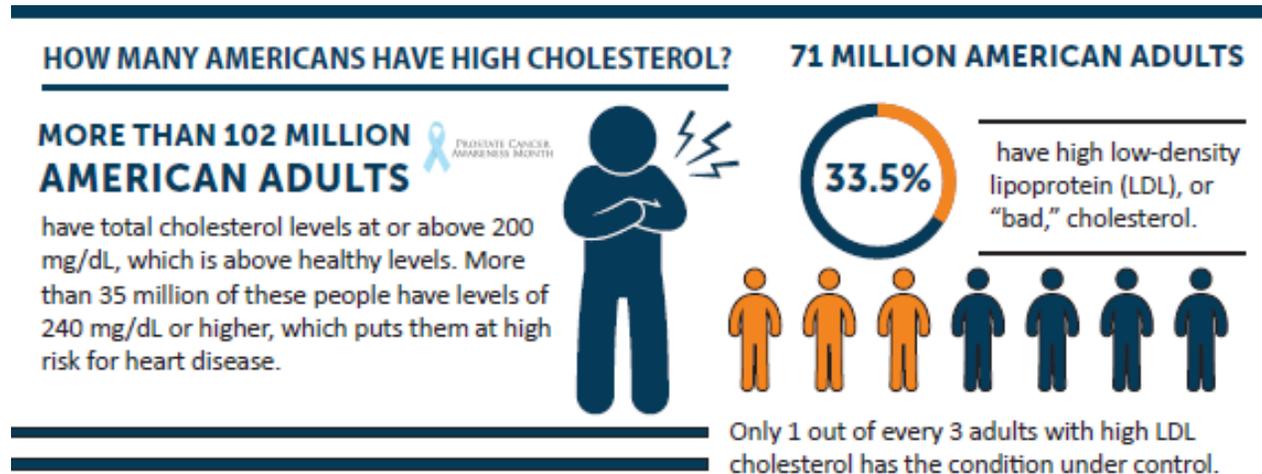
**Weight.** Excess weight tends to increase your LDL ("bad") cholesterol level. If you are [overweight](#) and have a high LDL-cholesterol level, losing weight may help you lower it. [Weight loss](#) also helps to lower [triglycerides](#) and raise [HDL](#) ("good") cholesterol levels. For more, please visit the [Weight Loss](#) Center.

**Physical activity/exercise.** Regular physical activity may lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol and raise HDL ("good") cholesterol levels. For more, please visit the [Exercise](#) and Activity Center.

**Age and sex.** Before the age of [menopause](#), women usually have total cholesterol levels that are lower than those of men the same age. As women and men get older, their blood cholesterol levels rise until about 60 to 65 years of age. After the age of about 50, women often have higher total cholesterol levels than men of the same age.

**Alcohol.** [Alcohol](#) intake increases HDL ("good") cholesterol but does not lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Doctors don't know for certain whether alcohol also reduces the risk of heart disease. Drinking too much alcohol can damage the [liver](#) and heart muscle, lead to [high blood pressure](#), and raise [triglycerides](#). Because of the risks, alcoholic [beverages](#) should not be used as a way to prevent heart disease.

**Stress.** [Stress](#) over the long term has been shown in several studies to raise blood cholesterol levels. One way that [stress](#) may do this is by affecting your habits. For example, when some people are under stress, they console themselves by eating fatty foods. The saturated fat and cholesterol in these foods contribute to higher levels of blood cholesterol. For more, please visit our Stress Center.



### How many Americans have high cholesterol?

More than 102 million American Adults (20 years or older) have total cholesterol levels at or above 200 mg/dL, which is above healthy levels. More than 35 million of these people have levels of 240 mg/dL or higher, which puts them at high risk for heart disease.<sup>1</sup>

The atherosclerotic disease of coronary arteries is known by the term 'coronary heart disease'. In the United States, coronary heart disease is the most common causes of death. It causes approximately 600,000 deaths each year. Atherosclerosis can also eventually cause brain damage from stroke. Aside from smoking and [high blood pressure](#), elevated blood cholesterol is also a major controllable risk factor for coronary heart disease.

**MORE THAN  
42 MILLION  
WOMEN**



are currently living with some form of cardiovascular disease.



of deaths in American women over the age of 20, or more than 432,000, are caused by cardiovascular disease each year.



**MORE THAN  
200,000 WOMEN**

die each year from heart attacks- five times as many women as breast cancer.

## How do you know if your cholesterol is high?

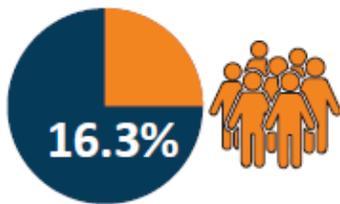
High cholesterol usually doesn't have any symptoms. As a result, many people do not know that their cholesterol levels are too high. However, doctors can do a simple blood test to check your cholesterol. High cholesterol can be controlled through lifestyle changes or if it is not enough, through medications.

It's important to check your cholesterol levels. High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

### Desirable Cholesterol Levels

<b>Total cholesterol</b>	Less than 170 mg/dL
<b>Low LDL ("bad") cholesterol</b>	Less than 110 mg/dL
<b>High HDL ("good") cholesterol</b>	35 mg/dL or higher
<b>Triglycerides</b>	Less than 150 mg/dL

Approximately one in every six adults



of the U.S. adult population—has high total cholesterol.



People with high **total cholesterol** have **approximately twice** the risk of heart disease as people with optimal levels. A desirable level is lower than 200 mg/dL.



**More women than men have high cholesterol in the United States.**

## **If you have high cholesterol, what can you do to lower it?**

Your doctor may prescribe medications to treat your high cholesterol.<sup>5</sup> In addition, you can lower your cholesterol levels through lifestyle changes:

- Low-fat and high-fiber food (Eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole grains).
- For adults, getting at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate or 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity a week. For those aged 6-17, getting 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Don't smoke or quit if you smoke.

## **National Cholesterol Education Month – What's The Purpose?**

- The main purpose of National Cholesterol Education Month is to inform the public about the dangers of having high levels of cholesterol. It also promotes regular cholesterol screening which is very important since high cholesterol doesn't cause any symptoms until it is already serious. The public health and awareness campaign also aims to educate the public on how to keep their cholesterol level normal or lower it.

### **(LEARN MORE)**

- <https://nationaltoday.com/national-cholesterol-education-month/>
- <https://www.qzxr.com/c/quiz/444554/cholesterol-fact-or-fiction-a4973d07-5071-4094-a0a9-87189fd9eaa8>
- <https://www.heart.org/-/media/files/health-topics/cholesterol/my-cholesterol-guide-english.pdf?la=en>
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- [www.everydayhealth.com/high-cholesterol/national-cholesterol-education-month/](http://www.everydayhealth.com/high-cholesterol/national-cholesterol-education-month/)
- [www.consumerhealthdigest.com/health-awareness/national-cholesterol-education-month.html](http://www.consumerhealthdigest.com/health-awareness/national-cholesterol-education-month.html)
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