



HealthyPeople

NATIONAL CHOLESTEROL EDUCATION MONTH

September is National Cholesterol Education Month, a good time to get your blood cholesterol checked and take steps to lower it if it is high.

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.

WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and many foods. Your body needs cholesterol to function normally and makes all that you need. Too much cholesterol can build up in your arteries. After a while, these deposits narrow your arteries, putting you at risk for heart disease and stroke.

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 US.



COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT CHOLESTEROL

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU HAVE CHOLESTEROL CHECKED?

Adults 20 years or older should have their cholesterol checked every 5 years. Guidelines for cholesterol screening among young adults differ, but experts agree on the need to screen young adults who have other risk factors for coronary heart disease: obesity, smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, and family history. A simple blood test called a lipoprotein profile can measure your total cholesterol levels, including LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or "bad" cholesterol), HDL (high-density lipoprotein, or "good" cholesterol), and triglycerides.

The following chart shows optimal lipid levels for adults:

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

CAN CHILDREN AND ADLOSCEENTS HAVE HIGH CHOLESTEROL?

Yes. High cholesterol can develop in early childhood and adolescence, and your risk increases as your weight increases. It is important for children over 2 years of age to have their

cholesterol checked, if they are overweight/obese, and have a family history of high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or certain chronic conditions (chronic kidney disease, chronic inflammatory diseases, congenital heart disease, and childhood cancer survivorship).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH CHOLESTEROL, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO LOWER IT?

Your doctor may prescribe medications to treat your high cholesterol. 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 if you do smoke, quit.

Source: cdc.gov