



HealthyPeople

KNOW YOUR CHOLESTEROL

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. Take some time to learn about lipid profiles and about food and lifestyle choices that help you reach personal cholesterol goals.

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. 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.

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.



MAKE SURE YOUR CHOLESTEROL IS IN CHECK

The National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) recommends that adults aged 20 years or older have their cholesterol checked every 5 years. Preventive 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. Less than half of young adults who have these risk factors don't get cholesterol screening even though up to a quarter of them have elevated cholesterol. 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.

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 quit if you smoke.

If you have been diagnosed with high blood cholesterol, it is important that you continue your treatment. Follow-up care can vary depending on your cholesterol levels, your risk of having a cardiovascular complication such as a heart attack or a stroke, and your response to treatment. Take care of you.