



# Greenville Medical Associates

## Hyperlipidimia

### Overview

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that occurs naturally in all parts of the body.

If your arteries are damaged, cholesterol is sent through the blood to repair the damage. Cholesterol combines with other substances and sticks to the walls of your arteries. This is called plaque.

Plaque can narrow your arteries or even block them. The damage to your arteries and the resulting plaque can contribute to heart disease.

Your cholesterol levels tend to rise as you get older. There are usually no signs or symptoms that you have high blood cholesterol, but it can be detected with a blood test. You are more likely to have high cholesterol if members of your family have it or if you are overweight.

You can lower your cholesterol by exercising more and eating a healthy diet. You also may take medication to lower your cholesterol.

### Introduction

When your blood vessels are damaged, your body sends cholesterol through the blood to repair the damage. The resulting buildup of cholesterol in the blood vessels is called plaque. Plaque buildup contributes to heart disease and strokes.

Your risk of heart disease and other health problems can be reduced with healthy lifestyle choices. These include eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise. Medications are also often prescribed to lower your cholesterol levels.

This health information will help you understand cholesterol and how to control high cholesterol.

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## What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance. It is found in the fat in your blood and in every cell in your body. Your body uses cholesterol to build healthy cells.

Triglycerides are fatty acids that provide most of the energy needed by the body's tissues. They are a type of fat found in the blood and fat cells.

Cholesterol and triglycerides are packed into lipoproteins by the liver. Lipoproteins carry fat and triglycerides to fat cells in the body through the bloodstream. LDL and HDL are types of lipoproteins.

If your arteries are damaged, the liver sends LDL to the arteries to repair them. LDL cholesterol can build up inside the arteries. This is called plaque.

Plaque buildup is known as atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis can lead to heart disease, heart attacks and strokes. These are forms of cardiovascular disease. That is why LDL is commonly referred to as "bad cholesterol."

HDL usually collects the bad cholesterol and takes it back to the liver. HDL can help prevent heart attacks and stroke. That is why HDL is commonly referred to as "good cholesterol."

Cholesterol is only found in animal products. It is created in the liver. Vegetables do not contain cholesterol.

## Diagnosis

Cholesterol levels should be checked by a health care provider every 1 to 2 years.

The level of cholesterol in the body can be measured with a blood test. The results come as 3 main numbers:

- Total Cholesterol.
- LDL.
- HDL.

Your health care provider will use your cholesterol levels to help you understand your risk of heart

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attack and stroke.

Other serious risk factors for cardiovascular disease include:

- High blood pressure.
- Obesity.
- Smoking.

Other risk factors for cardiovascular disease include:

- Age. Men who are 45 or older and women who are 55 or older are at an increased risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Diabetes.
- Family history of heart problems.
- HDL level lower than 35.

After considering all of your risk factors for cardiovascular disease, your health care provider will talk with you about healthy lifestyle habits. They may also recommend taking medication to lower your risk.

## **Causes**

When your blood vessels are damaged, your liver sends more cholesterol through the blood to repair the damage. The resulting buildup of cholesterol in the blood vessels is called plaque. Plaque buildup contributes to heart disease and stroke.

High cholesterol tends to run in families.

Certain medical conditions can increase cholesterol levels. These include:

- Certain genetic diseases.
- Diabetes.
- Obesity.
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- Thyroid gland problems.

Stress can also increase the levels of cholesterol in the body.

Eating an unhealthy diet can contribute to plaque buildup and can make many health problems worse.

## Treatment Options

Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise along with a healthy diet, can help lower your cholesterol levels.

If a medical condition is causing high cholesterol, treating the condition can help bring your cholesterol levels back to normal.

Medications may also be prescribed. The types of medications that are given depend on the patient's cholesterol levels, overall health and risk of heart problems or stroke.

Regular follow-up care with a health care provider is needed to make sure that the treatment is working.

## Diet

Eating a healthy diet can help you lower your cholesterol levels. You can help keep your heart healthy by eating more nutrient-rich foods and less refined, processed and fast foods.

Vegetables and fruit are good sources of vitamins and minerals. They are also low in calories and rich in dietary fiber. Eating more vegetables may fill you up so you eat less of other less healthy foods and reduce your risk for heart disease.

Eating the right types of fat can help you prevent heart disease. Getting the right balance of omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids is important. Healthy sources of fat include:

- Avocados.
- Canola and olive oil.
- Salmon and other fatty fish.
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- Raw seeds and nuts.

Talk to your health care provider for more information.

Your body also needs protein to help you prevent heart disease. Nuts and legumes, such as beans, peas and lentils are good sources of protein. Eat protein sources that contain saturated fat in moderation. These include animal products such as eggs, dairy products, meat and poultry.

Avoiding certain foods can help you prevent heart disease. Foods to avoid include:

- Fried foods.
- Processed foods, such as chips and baked goods.
- Anything else that contains trans fat.

## Medications

Lifestyle changes can help you manage your risk for cardiovascular disease. But your health care provider may also prescribe medications such as statins. Statins slow down the rate at which LDL is made. They also speed up the rate at which the liver destroys LDL.

Mild side effects of statins may include upset stomach, constipation and cramps.

Rare side effects of statins include:

- Liver problems.
- Memory loss or confusion.
- Nerve or muscle damage.
- Type 2 diabetes.

If you choose to take statins, take coenzyme Q10, also known as CoQ10 or ubiquinol as a supplement. This may help prevent problems with your immune system and heart.

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Your health care provider may prescribe nicotinic acid to treat high cholesterol. Nicotinic acid, also known as niacin or Vitamin B, can decrease levels of LDL and raise the levels of HDL. Side effects may include a higher risk of severe bleeding or diabetes.

## Summary

Cholesterol is a waxy substance. When your blood vessels are damaged, your body sends cholesterol through the blood to repair the damage. The resulting buildup of cholesterol in the blood vessels is called plaque. Plaque buildup contributes to heart disease and strokes.

The level of cholesterol in the body can be measured with a blood test. The results come as 3 main numbers:

- Total Cholesterol.
- LDL.
- HDL.

Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise along with a healthy diet, can help lower your cholesterol levels. Reducing stress can also help.

You can help keep your heart healthy by eating more nutrient-rich foods and less refined, processed and fast foods.

Avoiding certain foods can help you prevent heart disease. Foods to avoid include:

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