

Simple ways to lower cholesterol

You can't feel or see high cholesterol, but it's nothing to brush aside. People with high cholesterol have an increased risk of heart disease.



A simple blood test can tell you if you have high cholesterol. If your levels are high, your doctor may put you on a cholesterol-lowering program. This may include medicine, but often includes making heart-healthy lifestyle changes.



LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Even if your cholesterol isn't high, these changes can help you keep it at a healthy level.

- **Avoid smoking or quit if you do smoke.** Smoking lowers your good cholesterol.
- **Work toward a healthy weight.** Losing just a few pounds can lower bad cholesterol and triglycerides.
- **Get active.** Exercise can raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides.
- **Get more fiber in your diet.** Soluble fiber, found in oats, legumes, and fruits and vegetables, may help lower cholesterol.
- **Eat healthy fats.** Limit saturated fats found in fatty cuts of meat, dairy products, and desserts. Focus on healthy fats found in olive oil, fish, avocados, seeds and nuts.
- **Eat more vegetarian proteins.** Beans, nuts, peas, soy and lentils are healthy proteins that don't have the saturated fats found in most meat.
- **Limit added sugars and salt.** Limit sweetened drinks, snacks, and sweets, such as cake, cookies, and candy. Aim for less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day.
- **Manage stress.** Chronic stress may increase LDL cholesterol and decrease HDL cholesterol. Learn to relax. Practice meditation or do breathing exercises. Stay connected with family and friends. See a professional counselor when needed.
- **Get enough good quality sleep.** Aim for 7-9 hours per night.