

CHOLESTEROL



What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by the liver. Cholesterol helps build cell membranes and is used to make hormones, like estrogen and testosterone, and vitamin D.

Many adults may not think about what cholesterol means for kids, but heart disease has its roots in childhood. High levels of cholesterol in children can increase their chances of heart disease and strokes as adults.

Where Does Cholesterol Come From?

The liver makes all the cholesterol that the body needs. But cholesterol also comes from some of the foods we eat. Foods that are high in saturated fat and trans fat also can increase the liver's production of cholesterol.

These foods from animals contain cholesterol:

- egg yolks
- meat
- poultry
- seafood
- dairy products (including milk, cheese, and ice cream)



Foods from plants, like vegetables, fruits, and grains, don't have any cholesterol. [Source: healthykids.org](https://www.healthykids.org)

What Are the Types of Cholesterol?

Cholesterol in the blood doesn't move through the body on its own. It combines with proteins to travel through the bloodstream. Cholesterol and protein traveling together are called **lipoproteins**.

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and **high-density lipoprotein (HDL)** are the most commonly discussed lipoproteins.

High levels of LDL and low levels of HDL increase a person's risk of heart disease.

What Causes High Cholesterol?

Three major things contribute to high cholesterol levels:

- diet: eating a diet high in fats, particularly saturated fat and trans fat
- heredity: having a parent or close family member with high cholesterol
- obesity: having a poor diet and not exercising

People who are physically active, eat healthy foods, don't have a family history of high cholesterol or heart disease, and aren't overweight are less likely to have high cholesterol.

How To Keep Cholesterol Levels Healthy

- Eat a heart-healthy diet: Consume plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats (such as olive oil, nuts, and avocados). Limit saturated and trans fats found in processed foods, red meat, and full-fat dairy.
- Exercise regularly

HIGH-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (HDL)



Good Cholesterol

LOW-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (LDL)



Bad Cholesterol

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