

# Managing Your Cholesterol



## WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that the body uses to make hormones and other substances. High blood cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Two blood cholesterol measurements are:

**LDL** (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is the “bad” cholesterol because it leads to a buildup of cholesterol in the arteries.

**HDL** (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol is the “good” cholesterol because it helps remove cholesterol from the body. An HDL of 60 mg/dL or higher will help lower your risk for heart disease.

## WHAT AFFECTS CHOLESTEROL LEVELS?

**Diet** - Foods high in solid fat, like cheese, butter, pizza, and many fast foods, can make your cholesterol go up.

**Weight** - Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease and can increase your cholesterol.

**Physical Activity** - Regular activity can lower your total cholesterol and can help you lose weight.

**Age and Gender** - As men and women get older, their cholesterol levels rise.

**Heredity** - Your genes partly determine how much cholesterol your body makes. High cholesterol can run in families.

## HOW CAN I MANAGE MY CHOLESTEROL?

### Healthy Eating

- Choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products, lean meats, skinless poultry, and 8 ounces of seafood weekly.
- Read food labels to avoid trans fat found in processed foods like baked goods. Look for soft and liquid margarines.
- Increase fiber in your diet from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Soluble fiber found in oats, dried peas, and beans can help lower your cholesterol.
- Learn more about healthy eating from the “Eating for Life” program.

For more information, visit  
[optimahealth.com/mylifemyplan](https://optimahealth.com/mylifemyplan)

**OptimaHealth**  
A Service of Sentara

### Physical Activity

- Increase your physical activity to a total of 30 minutes a day most days of the week, in no less than 10-minute periods. Exercise can help you lose weight and lower your LDL level while raising your HDL level.

### Take Care of Yourself

- Avoid tobacco products.
- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Get regular checkups with your physician.

*Adapted from What You Need to Know About High Blood Cholesterol, 2009. For more information, go to <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc> and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition, December 2015. Available at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.*

## Staying Healthy Programs

To order programs, visit [wellnessforme.com](http://wellnessforme.com).

### Eating for Life

Develop healthy eating and exercise habits

### Get Off Your Butt: Stay Smokeless for Life

Stop using tobacco to benefit your health

### Guided Meditation

Experience a retreat from everyday stressors

### Healthy Habits Healthy You

Develop habits to prevent diabetes and heart disease

### Tai Chi

Learn to mentally and physically relax

### WalkAbout With Healthy Edge

Walk your way to better health

### Yoga

Stretching and strengthening exercises

For more information, visit  
[optimahealth.com/mylifemyplan](http://optimahealth.com/mylifemyplan)

**OptimaHealth**   
A Service of Sentara