

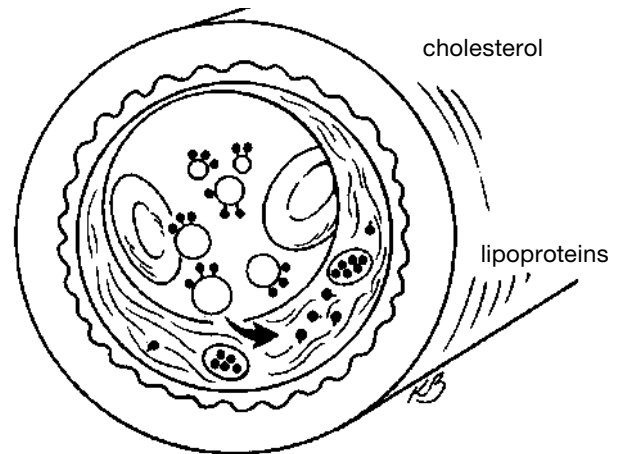
# What Are High Blood Cholesterol and Triglycerides?

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## What is high blood cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs.

The saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol you eat may raise your blood cholesterol level. Having too much cholesterol in your blood may lead to increased risk for heart disease and stroke. About half of American adults have levels that are too high (200 mg/dL or higher) and about 1 in 5 has a level in the high-risk zone (240 mg/dL or higher). The good news is that you can take steps to control your cholesterol.



Cholesterol travels to the body's cells through the bloodstream by way of lipoproteins.

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## What's so bad about it?

Cholesterol and other fats can't dissolve in your blood. To travel to your cells, they use special carriers called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol is often called "the bad kind." When you have too much LDL cholesterol in your blood, it can join with fats and other substances to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced. If this buildup of plaque ruptures, a blood clot may form at this location or a piece may break off and travel

in the bloodstream. If a blood clot blocks the blood flow to your heart, it causes a heart attack. If a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.

A "good kind" of cholesterol, on the other hand, is called high-density lipoprotein (HDL). It carries harmful cholesterol away from the arteries and helps protect you from heart attack and stroke. It's better to have a lot of HDL cholesterol in your blood.

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## How can I lower the bad cholesterol in my blood?

- Cut down on foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol. These include fatty meats, butter, cheese, whole-milk dairy products, egg yolks, shellfish, other fish, organ meats, poultry and solid fats (foods from animals).
- Do physical activities at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week.
- Eat more foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and high in fiber. These include fruits and vegetables, whole grains and grain products, beans and peas, fat-free and low-fat milk products, lean meats and poultry without skin, fatty fish, and nuts and seeds in limited amounts.
- Lose weight if you need to.
- Ask your doctor about medicines that can reduce cholesterol (not recommended for all patients).

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## What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in your body. They're also a major energy source. They come from food, and your body also makes

them. High levels of blood triglycerides are often found in people who have high cholesterol levels, heart problems, are overweight or have diabetes.

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## What about fats?

There are different kinds of fats in the foods we eat. Saturated fat is the kind that raises blood cholesterol, so it's not good for you. Avoid animal fats like lard and meat fat, and some plant fats like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil.

*Trans fat* comes from adding hydrogen to vegetable oils and tends to raise blood cholesterol. It's used in commercial baked goods and for cooking in most restaurants and fast-food chains. It's also in milk and beef.

*Polyunsaturated fats* are found in vegetable oils and fish oils. These tend to lower blood cholesterol when consumed in moderation and used to replace saturated or trans fats in the diet.

*Monounsaturated fats* are found in olive, canola, peanut, sunflower and safflower oils. In a low-saturated-fat diet, they may lower blood cholesterol.

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## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.

3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

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## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?

How does exercise affect my levels?