

# **Cholesterol**

High cholesterol is a condition, where too much cholesterol is circulating through your body. Although cholesterol is important in performing several biological functions, too much cholesterol could lead to heart disease if not properly addressed.

## **What Is High Cholesterol?**

There's been a lot of news about cholesterol recently, but what does it mean in terms of our health? Cholesterol has an important task in our bodies to carry out a variety of biological processes, but if you have too much of it in the body, it can potentially cause heart disease. The worst problem with high cholesterol is that you usually don't even know you have it, unless you've had your cholesterol recently tested. There are many things to know about this silent, yet potentially deadly, condition. Do you know everything you need to know about high cholesterol?

If you've ever taken a close look at your blood test results, you may have noticed that under your total cholesterol results, there are also types of cholesterol and triglycerides listed. Some of these types of cholesterol can be dangerous to your heart if you have too much of it circulating in your body. There, however, is another type of cholesterol that is actually good to have around. Knowing the different types of cholesterol circulating in your body will help you to understand the role that these fats play in your health, as well as to understand your cholesterol test results.

## **What Causes High Cholesterol?**

There are many factors that can place you at risk for having high cholesterol, including your age, certain diseases, diet and lifestyle. Leading a sedentary lifestyle that consists of high-fat foods and no exercise can contribute to having high cholesterol levels. Additionally, having a family history of high cholesterol, such as a parent or sibling being diagnosed with high cholesterol levels, also places you at risk of having this condition. Knowing your risks for high cholesterol can help you to address — and in some cases, correct — them before they lead to further complications.

## **Who Is More Susceptible to Having High Cholesterol?**

Anyone is at risk of having high cholesterol. You could be the healthiest person in the world, but if you have a family history of high cholesterol, you're at risk for increased cholesterol levels. You could also be the person who has no family history of high cholesterol, but likes to eat fast food at every meal. There is no true predictor of who will get high cholesterol. Studies, however, have shown that certain ethnicities and populations are at higher risk of having high cholesterol and heart disease.

## **Common Myths About High Cholesterol**

There are a lot of rumors circulating out there about high cholesterol. Some of them are true, but many of them are false. High cholesterol is often misunderstood, and many people think that having no symptoms of high cholesterol means that everything is OK. Additionally, just because your cholesterol levels are OK now, it doesn't give you permission to not worry about high cholesterol for the rest of your life. Believing some of these [myths](#)

could place your health in danger if you give in to them. This article will help you sort the facts from fiction.

### **[Why Should You Worry About High Cholesterol?](#)**

High cholesterol has no symptoms, so that means you don't need to worry about high cholesterol, right? Think again. While high cholesterol is silent, it can potentially result in a variety of health problems, including a heart attack or stroke. Addressing your high cholesterol levels now can help you to avoid complications later on in life.

Unlike many diseases, high cholesterol is often silent -- you don't know you have it until you get tested, because there are no symptoms. Despite this, there are some things that you can do to detect high cholesterol. Getting your cholesterol checked regularly and knowing your risks are important. Allowing your cholesterol levels to remain elevated could place you at risk for many problems down the road - including a heart attack.

### **[What Are the Symptoms of High Cholesterol?](#)**

Unlike other conditions where the symptoms are pretty clear-cut, high cholesterol is one of those conditions that often creep up on you. In fact, many are surprised when they are diagnosed with high cholesterol - despite feeling relatively healthy. So how can you tell if your cholesterol is high? The answer may surprise you.

### **[How Else Can You Tell If You Have High Cholesterol?](#)**

Because of the lack of symptoms associated with high cholesterol, a good way to tell if your cholesterol is high is by taking a cholesterol test. This is a simple blood test that will measure the levels of [lipids](#), or fats, in the blood. If your cholesterol levels are not within the ranges that they are supposed to be in, your healthcare provider may prescribe that you make certain changes to your lifestyle, medications, or both of these to assist you in lowering your cholesterol.

Some ways you can help lower it:

- [Lifestyle changes](#)
- [Medications](#)

### **[Does Your Ethnicity Place You At Risk For High Cholesterol?](#)**

Genetics can also play a role in high cholesterol. In fact, having a certain ethnic background could also place you at higher risk of having high cholesterol and heart disease. If you are from one of these backgrounds, you should get your cholesterol checked on a regular basis. Doing this will address high cholesterol, and heart disease, before complications develop. Who's more at risk?

- [African Americans and High Cholesterol](#)
- [Hispanics and High Cholesterol](#)

## **Do Certain Diseases Cause High Cholesterol?**

Having certain diseases may also place you at risk of having high cholesterol. Unfortunately, cholesterol levels sometimes get neglected in favor of treating the condition. The good news is that treating these conditions may help you to also get your cholesterol levels under control. It is very important to get your cholesterol checked - especially if you have a condition that places you at risk of having high cholesterol.

Some diseases that can raise your risk of having high cholesterol:

- [Thyroid Disease](#)
- [Diabetes](#)
- [Metabolic Disease](#)

Some [medications](#) may also cause your cholesterol to be high.

So, you've been diagnosed with high cholesterol, but you feel great. This gives you a reason to ignore it, right? Wrong. Not addressing your high cholesterol may cost you later on. In fact, some people do not ever realize that there is a problem until they have had their first heart attack. Therefore, it's very important to get your cholesterol checked regularly - and lower your cholesterol if it is high.

Here are some things that can happen if you ignore your high cholesterol levels:

Arterioscleroses

Heart Attack

Stroke

No matter which type of a [cholesterol test](#) you take -- whether it is in a healthcare provider's office, a home test, or at a health fair -- you will almost always get a total cholesterol reading. A total cholesterol reading represents the total amount of cholesterol circulating in your blood at the time of the test.

The following components are included in a total cholesterol reading:

- [LDL](#) ("bad" cholesterol)
- [HDL](#) ("good" cholesterol)
- [VLDL](#)

## **What Should My Total Cholesterol Levels Be?**

According to the [National Cholesterol Education Program](#), your total cholesterol level should be lower than 200 mg/dL. Total cholesterol levels between 200 and 239 mg/dL are considered borderline for high cholesterol. In this case, your healthcare provider may recommend lifestyle changes to lower it -- especially if it is discovered that your LDL and/or [triglycerides](#) are also high.

If your total cholesterol level is 240 mg/dL or above, your total cholesterol level is considered to be too high. In this circumstance, your healthcare provider would also examine the individual components that make up of your total cholesterol level – such as LDL, HDL, and VLDL. Based upon this, your healthcare provider may recommend lifestyle changes and/or medications to lower it.

### **What Does a Total Cholesterol Reading Tell You?**

A total cholesterol reading can be used to assess your risk for heart disease, however, it should not be relied upon as the only indicator. The individual components that make up your total cholesterol reading -- LDL, HDL, and VLDL -- are also important in measuring your risk.

For instance, your total cholesterol may be high, but this may be due to your good (HDL) cholesterol levels being too high -- which can actually help prevent heart disease. So, while a high total cholesterol level may help give you an indication that there is a problem with your cholesterol, the components that make up your total cholesterol should also be measured.