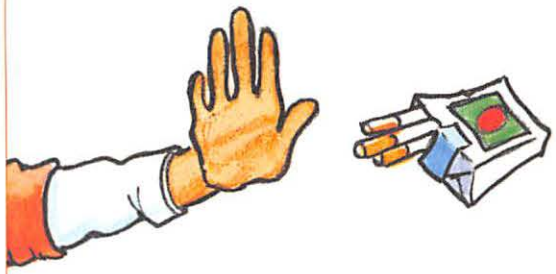
6. Get moving.

- ✓ Regular exercise may help lower your LDL and raise your HDL levels.
- ✓ Try for 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity on most days.

7. Stop smoking.

- ✓ Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to lower your risk for heart disease and heart attack.



8. Talk to your health care provider.

- ✓ Diet and exercise may not be enough to lower your cholesterol. Talk to your health care provider about medications.
- ✓ Find out if you have any other risk factors for heart disease, such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

High cholesterol can affect your heart and your health. If you have high cholesterol, it is important to take steps to lower your numbers. For more information, talk with your health care provider. Or visit cdc.gov/cholesterol on the Internet.

This pamphlet is not a substitute for medical care.
If you have questions or concerns, please talk with a health care provider.

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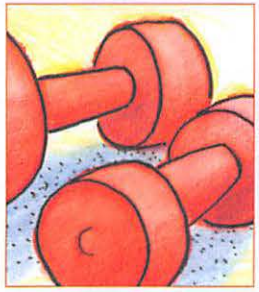
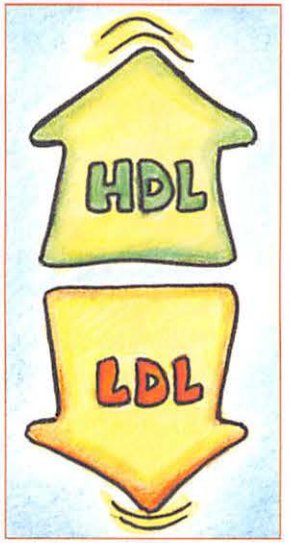
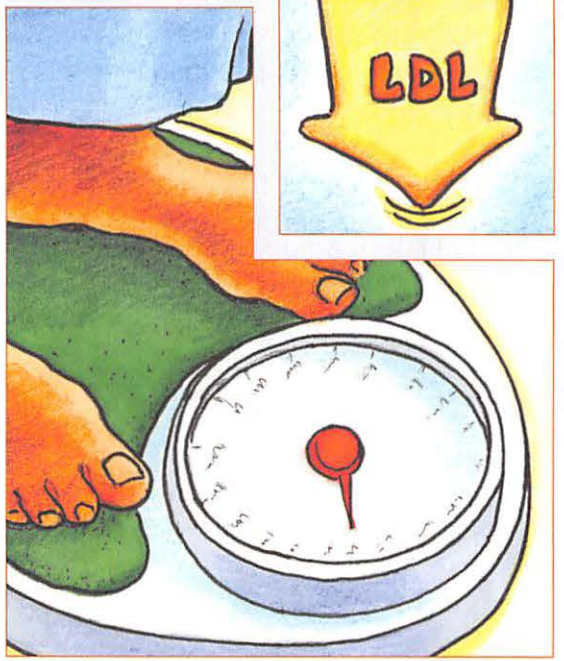
KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

8 Ways to Improve Your Cholesterol







PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

8 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Why should you lower your cholesterol?

Too much cholesterol in the blood builds up on the walls of the arteries, making them hard and narrow. When this happens, less blood and oxygen get to the heart. The heart can become damaged, causing heart disease. If the blood flow is cut off completely, you can have a heart attack. But you can take steps to lower your risk from high cholesterol.

1. Know your numbers.

- ✓ High cholesterol alone does not cause symptoms. Knowing your cholesterol numbers is important.
- ✓ A blood test will show your total cholesterol.
- ✓ It will also show your LDL or "bad" cholesterol, HDL or "good" cholesterol, and triglyceride levels.

Total cholesterol:
Best: Less than 200
Borderline high: Between 200–239
High: Over 240

LDL or "bad" cholesterol:
Best: Less than 100

HDL or "good" cholesterol:
Best: More than 60
HDL levels that are less than 40 put you at risk for heart disease.

Triglycerides (another type of blood fat):
Best: 150 or less

2. Be aware of your risk.

- ✓ Some of the risk factors for high cholesterol can be changed; others cannot.
- ✓ Things you can change include:
  - ❑ Your weight
  - ❑ What you eat
  - ❑ How much physical activity you get
- ✓ Things you cannot change include:
  - ❑ Your family history
  - ❑ Your age
  - ❑ Your gender

3. Watch your weight.

- ✓ If you are overweight, lose weight. Even a small weight loss may help your cholesterol.
- ✓ Weight loss is especially important if you carry most of your extra weight around the middle.
- ✓ Slow and steady weight loss works best. Try for 1/2 to 1 pound per week.
- ✓ Eating less and moving more is the best formula for safe, long-lasting weight loss.

4. Watch the amount and type of fat in your diet.

- ✓ Choose lean meats, fish or skinless poultry. Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
- ✓ Limit foods that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. These include butter, fatty meats, liver, egg yolks and full-fat dairy products.
- ✓ Avoid foods with trans fats. These include chips and deep-fried foods. Read labels to find out!
- ✓ Choose foods with heart-healthy fats. Good choices include canola and olive oils, avocados, walnuts and almonds. To keep a healthy weight, limit these fats to small servings.
- ✓ Add a heart-healthy fish to your weekly menu. Try salmon, mackerel and albacore tuna.

5. Eat foods high in fiber.

- ✓ Try to eat 25 grams of fiber every day.
- ✓ Oats, barley, beans and some fruits and vegetables are good sources.