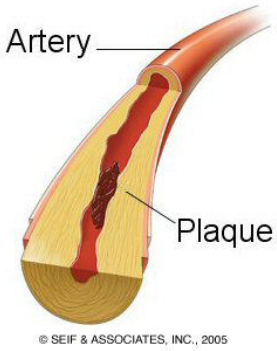
About Your Cholesterol

Cholesterol (plaque) is a type of fat. Cholesterol travels through your body in your blood. Your body needs a small amount of cholesterol, but too much can cause health problems. You get cholesterol in two ways:

- It is naturally made in your body by the liver.
- It is a part of many foods that you eat, like:
  - Fatty meats.
  - Fried foods.
  - Dairy foods like whole milk, cheese, and butter.
  - Eggs.



WHY IS A HIGH CHOLESTEROL LEVEL BAD FOR ME?

- Your blood vessels may clog up when you have too much cholesterol in your blood. This can cause:
  - Heart attacks.
  - Strokes.
  - Not enough blood flow to your heart, brain, kidneys, or feet.

IS ALL CHOLESTEROL BAD FOR ME?

When you eat foods that have a lot of cholesterol, you add to the cholesterol that is already made by your body. Not all cholesterol is bad for you. There are 2 different kinds of cholesterol.

- The “good” kind of cholesterol, called High-Density Lipoproteins (HDL). HDL helps your body. It finds and picks up "bad" cholesterol in your blood and takes it back to the liver. Your liver then gets rid of this bad cholesterol.
- The “bad” kind of cholesterol is Low-Density Lipoproteins (LDL). LDL can clog your blood vessels. Too much LDL cholesterol is harmful to your body.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHOLESTEROL LEVEL IS HIGH?

- A blood test is done to check your total cholesterol level. Your HDL and LDL level will also be checked.
  - Your total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/ml. If it is more than 240 mg/ml, your cholesterol level is high.
  - Your LDL cholesterol should be less than 100 mg/ml.
  - Your HDL cholesterol should be between 50-60 mg/ml. An HDL level less than 40 mg/ml may lead to heart disease.

HOW TO LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL

- Eat a low-fat diet:
  - **Eat less** eggs, whole dairy products (whole milk, cheese, and butter), fatty meats, and fried foods.
  - **Eat more** fruits, vegetables, whole-wheat breads, lean chicken, and fish (such as salmon or tuna).
- Exercise more. Talk to your doctor about an exercise plan that is right for you.
- Keep your weight at a healthy level. Talk to your doctor about what is right for you.
- Take medicines as your doctor tells you to.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET MY CHOLESTEROL LEVEL CHECKED?

Your cholesterol level should be checked at least once a year or as often as your doctor tells you.

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