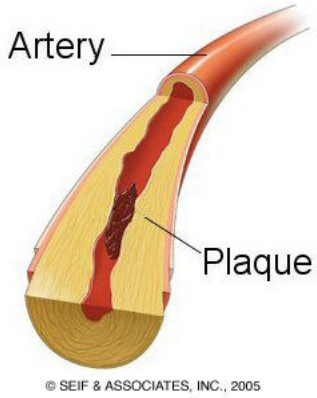
Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a white, waxy, fat-like protein needed by your body in small amounts. The liver makes all the cholesterol you need. It is carried from the liver by the blood through the blood vessels. Deposits (*plaque*) may build up on blood vessel walls. This makes the arteries narrower and stiffer. Plaque increases the risk for heart attack and stroke.



You cannot feel your cholesterol level even if it is very high. The only way to know is by a blood test to check your lipid (fats) levels. Once you know your cholesterol levels, you should keep a record of the test results. Work with your caregiver to to keep your levels in the desired range.

WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN:

- **Total cholesterol** is a rough measure of all the cholesterol in your blood.
- **LDL** is the so-called bad cholesterol. This is the type that deposits cholesterol
- in the walls of the arteries. You want this level to be low.
- **HDL** is the good cholesterol because it cleans the arteries and carries the LDL away. You want this level to be high.
- **Triglycerides** are fat that the body can either burn for energy or store. High levels are closely linked to heart disease.

DESIRED LEVELS:

- Total cholesterol below 200.
- LDL below 100 for people at risk, below 70 for very high risk.
- HDL above 50 is good, above 60 is best.
- Triglycerides below 150.

HOW TO LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL:

- **Diet**.
  - Choose fish or white meat chicken and turkey, roasted or baked. Limit fatty cuts of red meat, fried foods, and processed meats, such as sausage and lunch meat.
  - Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. Choose whole grains, beans, pasta, potatoes and cereals.
  - Use only small amounts of olive, corn or canola oils. Avoid butter, mayonnaise, shortening or palm kernel oils. Avoid foods with trans-fats.
  - Use skim/nonfat milk and low-fat/nonfat yogurt and cheeses. Avoid whole milk, cream, ice cream, egg yolks and cheeses. Healthy desserts include angel food cake, gingersnaps, animal crackers, hard candy, popsicles, and low-fat/nonfat frozen yogurt. Avoid pastries, cakes, pies and cookies.
- **Exercise.**
  - A regular program helps decrease LDL and raises HDL.
  - Helps with weight control.
  - Do things that increase your activity level like gardening, walking, or taking the stairs.
- **Medication**.
  - May be prescribed by your caregiver to help lowering cholesterol and the risk for heart disease.
  - You may need medicine even if your levels are normal if you have several risk factors.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow your diet and exercise programs as suggested by your caregiver.
- Take medications as directed.
- Have blood work done when your caregiver feels it is necessary.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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