High Cholesterol

What You Need to Know

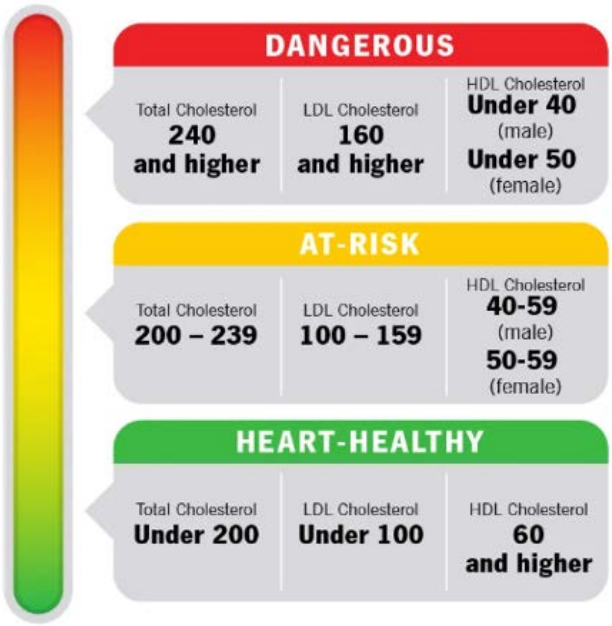
DC | HEALTH

What is High Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in your blood. Your body needs some cholesterol, but too much can build up in your arteries, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke. In most cases, adults with high cholesterol do not know that they have it.

How to Know If I'm At Risk?

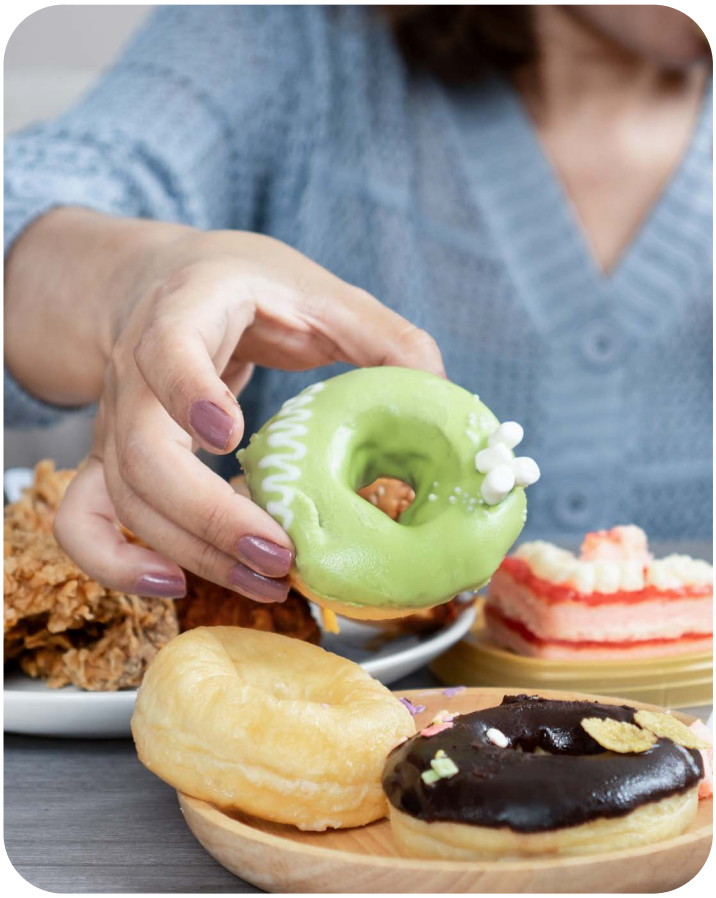
Cholesterol Levels



Source: American Heart Association

Some things can increase your chance of having high cholesterol, including:

- Having a family history of high cholesterol or heart disease
- Being overweight or obese
- Having diabetes or high blood pressure
- Eating a diet high in saturated and trans fats
- Not getting enough physical activity
- Smoking and drinking alcohol
- High cholesterol has no obvious symptoms, so regular blood tests are the only way to know your levels.



Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

How Can High Cholesterol Be Prevented?

You can lower your risk by:

- Eating a heart-healthy diet with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins
- Reducing saturated fats found in fried foods, processed snacks, and fatty meats
- Exercising regularly—aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days
- Avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol intake
- Managing stress and getting enough sleep
- Seeing a doctor for regular cholesterol checks

How Can High Cholesterol Be Managed or Treated?

If you have high cholesterol, it's important to:

- Work with your doctor to create a personalized health plan
- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine
- Monitor cholesterol levels regularly through blood tests
- Manage other risk factors like high blood pressure and diabetes

- **Examples of "Good" Cholesterol:** Foods like nuts, seeds, legumes, olive oil, canola oil, fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna), flax and chia seeds, avocado, high fiber fruits and vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Examples of "Bad" Cholesterol:** Foods like fatty cuts of meat, full-fat dairy products, deep-fried fast foods, processed foods (chips, cookies, other snack foods), and butter.

Resources

For tips and resources to help you build and maintain healthy habits, you can visit:

» **LivingWell DC:** Visit livingwell.dc.gov/page/go-go-dc for tools to help you eat healthy, exercise, get healthy sleep go to the doctor, and quit smoking.

» **DC QuitNow:** DC Quit Now offers no-cost programs, medications, and tips from former DC smokers that can help you stay tobacco-free. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit dcquitnow.org/

» **DC Fire and EMS Department:** Visit any DC fire station for blood pressure monitoring
Blood Pressure Program | fems

» **Healthy Eating:** USDA offers healthy eating tips and information, including budget-friendly healthy recipes: myplate.gov/

» **Learn How to Build Healthy Habits:** DC SNAP-Ed offers free nutrition and physical activity classes. To find a class, visit the Event Calendar on at livingwell.dc.gov/events or email info.snap-ed@dc.gov.

» **High Cholesterol:** learn how to manage high cholesterol at heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol