

High Cholesterol

High cholesterol, also referred to as hyperlipidemia or dyslipidemia, is a condition caused by an abnormal amount of cholesterol (or fat) in the blood.

Types of Cholesterol	
Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL)	“Bad cholesterol”
High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL)	“Good cholesterol”
Triglycerides	Major type of fat stored by the body

High cholesterol can mean: 1) high levels of total cholesterol, LDL, or triglycerides, 2) low levels of HDL, or 3) a combination of these options.

Risk

When there is too much cholesterol in the blood, it can build up in the walls of arteries. Over time, this build-up can cause the arteries to become narrowed and reduce or block flow and oxygen to the heart. When an artery is fully blocked, a stroke or heart attack can occur.

Medication

The goal of treatment for high cholesterol is to lower cholesterol levels and lower your risk of having a serious heart event. The medication you are prescribed will depend on your cholesterol levels, age, medical history, other health conditions you have, and other medications you take.

Taking your medications correctly is an important part of treating high cholesterol. Talk with your pharmacist about ways to remember to take your medications.

Monitoring

The most common medicine used to treat high cholesterol are statins. Some people may experience muscle pain when starting a statin. If you experience muscle pain, let your health care provider know. Your prescriber might recommend trying a different statin that you might tolerate better. Keep in mind that just because you have muscle pain with one statin does not mean it will happen with another.



Your cholesterol should be monitored regularly by your health care provider and will be monitored more often when you start or change a medication.

Other things you can do

Along with medication, a healthy lifestyle can help your cholesterol levels and reduce your risk of having a serious heart event. Helpful hints include:

- Follow a heart-healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight or lose weight if you are overweight or obese
- Participate in regular physical activity - exercise has been shown to help increase good cholesterol or HDL
- If you smoke, get help to quit.

Resources

1. American Heart Association (AHA). Cholesterol. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol>
2. Mayo Clinic. High Cholesterol. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/symptoms-causes/syc-20350800>