



Lower Your LDL Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in the body that performs several vital functions. Your body makes all the cholesterol you need. You need only a small amount of fat in your diet to make enough cholesterol to stay healthy.

There are two main types of cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the “good” cholesterol).

High levels of LDL cholesterol are linked to atherosclerosis, which is the accumulation of cholesterol-rich fatty deposits in arteries. If the arteries are blocked, the flow of blood to vital organs, especially the heart and brain, will be slowed or stopped. Atherosclerosis affecting the heart is called coronary artery disease, and can cause a heart attack.

Risk factors for coronary artery disease include the following:

- Being a male older than age 45
- Being a female older than age 55
- Being a female with premature menopause
- Having a family history of premature coronary artery disease
- Smoking cigarettes
- Having high blood pressure
- Not having enough good cholesterol

Symptoms

Most people with high cholesterol don’t have any symptoms until cholesterol-related atherosclerosis causes significant narrowing of the arteries. The result can be heart-related chest pain or other symptoms of coronary artery disease, as well as symptoms of decreased blood supply to the brain.

Prevention

You can take steps to prevent high cholesterol by eating healthful foods and exercising daily. You should avoid foods that are high in fat, such as eggs, fatty red meats, coconut oil, and dairy products made with whole milk.

If your cholesterol is not controlled with diet and other lifestyle changes, your doctor may recommend that you take one or more cholesterol-lowering medications.

