

## Cholesterol blood levels

The following levels are generally regarded as desirable:

- **Total cholesterol (TC) - 5.0 mmol/L or less.**  
[2 in 3 adults in the UK have a TC level of 5.0 or above.]
- LDL cholesterol after an overnight fast: 3.0 mmol/L or less.
- HDL cholesterol: 1.2 mmol/L or more.
- TC/HDL ratio: 4.5 or less.

As a rule, the higher the LDL cholesterol level, the greater the risk to health.

## Further help and information

### Hyperlipidaemia Education Atherosclerosis Research Trust UK (HEART UK)

7 North Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1PE

Tel (Helpline): 0845 450 5988 Web: [www.heartuk.org.uk](http://www.heartuk.org.uk)

### British Heart Foundation

Greater London House, 180 Hampstead Road, London, NW1 7AW

Tel (Heart Help Line): 0300 330 3311 Web: [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

### British Nutrition Foundation

Web: [www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

### Patient.co.uk

Web: <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Cholesterol.htm>

Medical information for patients

Some of the information in this leaflet is extracted from this site.

Alexandra Surgery  
125 Alexandra Park Road, London N22 7UN  
Tel 020 8888 2518

[www.alexandrasurgery.com](http://www.alexandrasurgery.com)



Name:

Cholesterol level:



## Cholesterol

Cholesterol blood tests are done to help assess your risk of developing heart disease or stroke.

## What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a lipid (fat chemical) that is made in the liver from fatty foods that we eat. A certain amount of cholesterol is present in the bloodstream. You need some cholesterol to keep healthy.

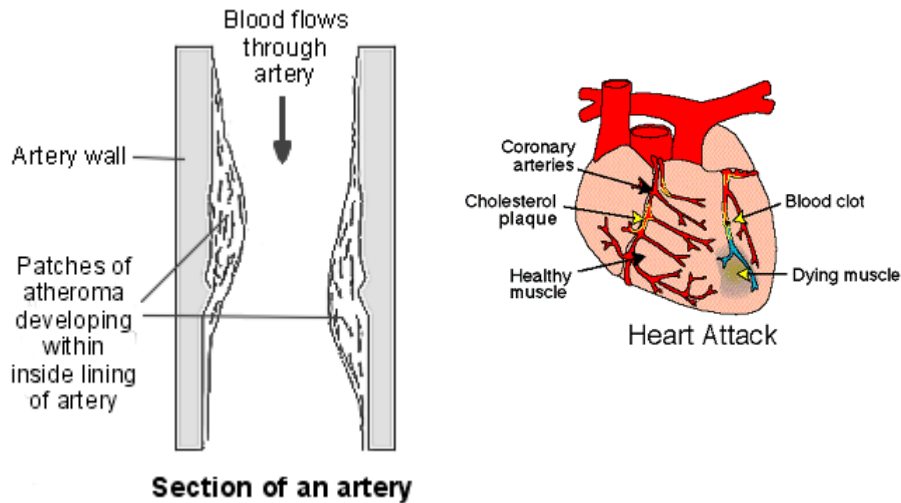
- LDL cholesterol. This is often referred to as bad cholesterol. This is the one mainly involved in forming atheroma. The majority of cholesterol in the blood is LDL cholesterol, but how much varies from person to person.
- HDL cholesterol. This is often referred to as good cholesterol.

## How does cholesterol affect health?

Small fatty lumps called Atheroma develop within the inside lining of arteries (blood vessels). Atheroma is also known as atherosclerosis and hardening of the arteries.

Over months or years, patches of atheroma can become larger and thicker. So in time, a patch of atheroma can make an artery narrower. This can reduce the blood flow through the artery.

Diseases caused by atheroma include: angina, heart attack, stroke, transient ischaemic attack (TIA) - sometimes called mini-stroke - and peripheral vascular disease. In the UK, these diseases are a major cause of poor health and the biggest cause of death.



## What affects the level of cholesterol?

In most people your cholesterol level reflects the amount of fat that you eat. This is not the full story, as different people who eat the same amount of fat can make different amounts of cholesterol. In general, however, if you eat less fat your cholesterol level is likely to go down.

## What treatments are available to reduce the risk?

Everyone should aim to tackle lifestyle risk factors. This means to:

- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet. [see below]
- Keep your salt intake to under 6 g a day.
- Keep your weight and waist in check.
- Take regular physical activity.
- Cut back if you drink a lot of alcohol.
- You may be offered a referral to a dietician to help you to lose weight and eat a healthy diet, to a specialist stop smoking clinic, or to a supervised exercise programme.

If you are at high risk of developing a cardiovascular disease then

- Treatment with medication is usually advised along with advice to tackle any lifestyle issues. No matter what your current cholesterol level, treatment is advised. This usually means: A medicine to lower your cholesterol level, usually with a statin medicine. They work by blocking an enzyme (chemical) which is needed to make cholesterol in the liver.
- For those who do have a cardiovascular disease, the aim is to reduce TC to less than 4.0 mmol/L *and* LDL cholesterol to less than 2.0 mmol/L.

## Can diet lower my cholesterol level?

Changing to a healthy diet can reduce cholesterol level. However, dietary changes alone may not lower a cholesterol level enough to change a high-risk person's risk of cardiovascular disease.

EAT PLENTY ☺	IN MODERATION ☺	DON'T EAT MUCH ☺
AT LEAST five portions of fruit and vegetables per day	INCLUDE 2-3 portions of fish per week - at least one of which should be oily	NOT MUCH fatty food such as fatty meats, cheeses, full-cream milk, fried food, butter, etc. Use low-fat, mono-unsaturated or polyunsaturated spreads
THE BULK OF MOST MEALS should be starch-based foods (cereals, wholegrain bread, potatoes, rice, pasta), plus fruit & vegetables	If you eat meat, it is best to EAT LEAN MEAT, or poultry such as chicken	If you do fry, choose a VEGETABLE OIL, such as sunflower, rapeseed or olive
		LIMIT SALT to no more than 6 g a day