



## Highs and Lows of Cholesterol Control

In general, high cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Lowering total cholesterol is an important part of reducing your risk of heart complications, but it's not the only part. That's because total cholesterol actually consists of two main lipoproteins – low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).

- **LDL is the “bad” cholesterol.** When there's too much LDL, it can join with other substances and form plaque inside artery walls. Plaque-narrowed blood vessels can lead to heart problems.
- **HDL is the “good” cholesterol.** While its role isn't as well understood, it seems to carry LDL out of the arteries to the liver, where it's removed from the body. High LDL levels may protect against heart attack and stroke.

### Lower LDL, raise HDL

“Studies show that high LDL is more serious than low HDL,” says Scott Grundy, M.D., chairman of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's National Cholesterol Education Adult Treatment Panel. Lifestyle changes can help lower LDL – by 20 percent or more for some people – and boost your HDL. Focus on these strategies:

1. **Chow down on healthful foods.** The key is to eat a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. To do this, choose plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, and low-fat or nonfat dairy products. Cut back on meats, high-fat dairy products, and processed foods.
2. **Track your body weight.** If you're overweight, shedding pounds can help. Your bathroom scale is one way to assess your weight. Another is to measure your waist. Your doctor may recommend losing weight if your waist measurement is more than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women.
3. **Exercise.** Simply put, regular exercise is one of the best things you can do to improve your cholesterol levels and protect your heart. Most healthy adults should aim for at least 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise, such as brisk walking, five days a week.

There are no outward signs of high cholesterol, so it's important to have your level checked routinely. During the testing process, blood is drawn and tested for total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, and triglycerides, another type of fat in the blood.

In addition to lifestyle changes, your doctor may recommend prescriptions to control your cholesterol and lower your risk of heart disease.

Source: UnitedHealthcare

**For more information regarding the TeamHealth Wellness Program,  
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