

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are another common type of fat found in your body which provide a major source of energy. Any excess calories from the food we eat that are not needed for quick energy are turned into triglycerides and stored in fat cells to be used later. If you regularly eat more calories than you burn, you may have high triglycerides.

High levels of triglycerides have been linked to atherosclerosis (build up of fatty deposits in your arteries) and an increased risk for cardiovascular disease. By eating fewer calories, reducing saturated fats in your diet and exercising regularly, high triglycerides can be lowered.

Classification values for fasting blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels are:

Total Cholesterol Below 4.0 mmol/L

LDL Cholesterol Below 2.5 mmol/L

HDL Cholesterol Above 1.0 mmol/L

Triglycerides Below 2.0 mmol/L

*Based on the National Heart Foundation (2001) Lipid Management Guidelines for individuals not at higher risk.



Generally, men have higher blood cholesterol levels than women before menopause, but levels in women are higher than men after menopause.



Cholesterol and Your Health

Lowering your blood cholesterol levels by modifying your lifestyle and eating habits will dramatically reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease – including having a fatal or disabling heart attack or stroke.

We aim to reduce death and disability from cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other health disorders related to obesity through research, clinical care, education and advocacy.

For more information contact Preventative Cardiology:

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The facts

Approximately half of adult Australians have a total blood cholesterol level higher than what is recommended safe! This makes high blood cholesterol a major health concern in Australia.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is essential to life and a vital part of every cell in the body. It is produced naturally by the liver and used by tissues in the body to build and maintain cells.

There are two types of cholesterol

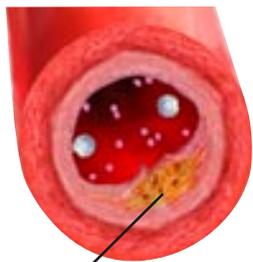
LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol is called the “bad” cholesterol because:

- It can help form plaques and contribute to atherosclerosis.
- Higher levels reflect an increased risk of heart disease.

HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol is called the “good” cholesterol because:

- It helps to remove excess cholesterol from plaques and thus slow plaque growth.
- Lower levels reflect a higher risk of heart disease.

The negative effects of high cholesterol



Plaque

The liver returns the cholesterol it cannot use to our bloodstream. An excess of cholesterol in our bloodstream can cause fatty deposits (“plaques”) to form in your arteries. This is a process that occurs over time called atherosclerosis. These deposits cause the arteries to narrow and can eventually block them completely, leading to a heart attack or stroke.

Reducing your cholesterol is therefore good for the prevention of:

- Coronary artery disease
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Peripheral artery disease

Cholesterol and your diet

The cholesterol in your diet comes mainly from saturated fats found in foods from animals. Food from plants do not contain cholesterol.



There is no need to eat foods high in cholesterol; your body can produce all the cholesterol it needs! However some foods that contain cholesterol are healthy foods with essential nutrients. These can be eaten in moderation, as long as your overall diet is low in saturated fats. High cholesterol foods include:

- Eggs – egg yolks contain vitamins, minerals and protein.
- Seafood – prawns and other seafood contain healthy omega-3 fatty acids, but avoid fried and battered seafood.
- Full fat dairy products – these are a good source of calcium.



How is high cholesterol treated?

You may be able to lower your cholesterol levels by limiting foods high in saturated fats which tend to boost LDL cholesterol and by changing some of your lifestyle habits.

If diet and lifestyle changes are not enough to reduce cholesterol or if you have inherited genes that cause high cholesterol, you may also need medicines. Medicines called statins are commonly used to lower LDL cholesterol. Even if you are taking medicines, diet and exercise are still important to your health! Your doctor may also refer you to a specialist who treats cardiovascular disease.

Tips for reducing cholesterol

For a **healthy diet** try to:

- Avoid deep fried takeaway foods, snack foods (e.g. potato chips), cakes, biscuits, pastries and processed meats (e.g. sausage and salami).
- Choose lean meat and sandwich meats (e.g. turkey breast or chicken), oily fish (e.g. salmon) and poultry. Eat more fruits, vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, legumes and nuts and seeds. Include reduced fat dairy products or have added calcium soy drinks and select high monounsaturated margarine and unsaturated oils for cooking.

For a **healthy lifestyle** try to:

- Exercise regularly (30 min per day of brisk walking), lose excess body fat, reduce your alcohol intake to two or less drinks per day (men) or one per day (women), quit smoking and minimise physical and emotional stress by relaxation and thinking positively.
- Control your blood sugar levels.

