

CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fatty substance known as a lipid, and is part of all animal cells. Although often labelled 'good' or 'bad', it is essential for many of the body's metabolic processes, including hormone and bile production, building the structure of cell walls and to help the body use vitamin D. The human body is very good at making its own cholesterol in the liver and in most cells. In fact, your body makes basically all of the cholesterol it needs, but it is also found in some of the foods we eat, in particular animal products such as eggs, meats, shellfish and dairy products.

TWO IMPORTANT WAYS OF TRANSPORTING CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is transported around the body in small packages called lipoproteins, which are made of fat and protein. There are two main types of these transporters:

Low density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol – Carries most of the cholesterol that is delivered to cells from the liver. It is called the 'bad' cholesterol when its level in the bloodstream is high because it can clog up your arteries by a buildup of plaque on the artery walls.

High density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol – Referred to as the 'good' cholesterol because it helps remove excess cholesterol out of the cells, including cells in the arteries, and returns it to the liver for removal from the body.

SAFE BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Having high levels of total cholesterol in your blood is a risk factor for heart disease, so it's important to manage your cholesterol levels. Cholesterol is measured in millimoles per litre.

Total Cholesterol	Rating
<5.0 mmol/L	Ideal
<5.5 mmol/L	Desired
5.6-6.5 mmol/L	Moderate Risk
>6.5 mmol/L	High Risk

A healthy HDL or 'good' cholesterol reading is a reading above 1.0 mmol/L.

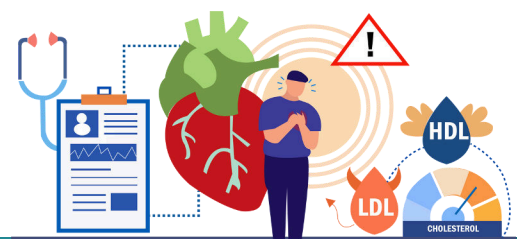
THE EFFECTS OF HIGH CHOLESTEROL

The liver is the main processing center for cholesterol and dietary fat. When we eat trans fats, too many processed sugars (which are converted to fat) or processed fatty foods the liver transports the fat, together with cholesterol in the form of lipoproteins, into our bloodstream. Too much LDL cholesterol circulating within our bloodstream leads to fatty deposits that develop in the arteries. This causes the vessels to narrow and they can eventually become blocked, which can lead to heart disease and stroke.

WHAT INFLUENCES HIGH CHOLESTEROL?

Poor lifestyle choices are primarily to blame for increased heart disease risk, such as eating too much refined sugar and processed foods, being overweight, getting too little exercise and movement, excessive alcohol intake, smoking and lack of sun exposure.

Genetics play a role, as some people seem genetically predisposed to create unhealthy levels of cholesterol in their bodies, regardless of their lifestyle. As many as 1 in 4 people still may be more vulnerable to diets high in cholesterol and these people will need to continue watching what they eat. Recent research has found that diet influences only about 20 percent of a person's cholesterol and the rest is governed by genetics, but you should still eat a healthy varied diet for optimal health and to reduce the risk of heart disease.



11 GREAT WAYS TO NATURALLY LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL

1. Eat more fibre

Fibre is an essential food component when it comes to lowering your cholesterol and improving your digestive health. The soluble fibre in foods such as lentils, vegetables, fruits, psyllium husk, oats, nuts and seeds forms a sticky substance that traps cholesterol and helps move it out of the body.

2. Eat more vegetables

Vegetarian diets have been found to be effective in lowering cholesterol. Consider going vego as a short-term plan (ie. for 3-6 months) when you need to be intensive about lowering cholesterol levels. Increasing the amount of fresh vegetables you consume will support your general health by supplying the body with a range of important vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibre.

3. Cook your tomatoes

Tomatoes are a significant source of a plant compound called lycopene, which reduces levels of LDL cholesterol. Research shows that the body absorbs more lycopene if the tomatoes are processed or cooked, so drink tomato juice and add fresh or tinned tomatoes to soups, pasta sauces and casseroles.

4. Include berries in your diet

Berries, especially strawberries and blueberries, are high in vitamins, fibre, and cholesterol-friendly phytosterols, making them the perfect sweet treat to include in your diet. Frozen berries are just as good; they're available all year round and are often cheaper than fresh berries.

5. Increase your healthy fat intake and avoid trans fats

The omega-3 fatty acids in foods like oily fish, raw nuts, seeds, avocado, olives and olive oil are known as HDL or 'good fats' and are some of the most powerful foods for lowering cholesterol. Trans fats are the real bad guys when it comes to fat, as they can raise LDL cholesterol and lower HDL cholesterol. They're uncommon in nature but became commonly produced industrially from vegetable fats for use in margarine, snack foods, packaged baked goods and frying fast food back in the 1950s. Always check the ingredients list.

6. Reduce your sugar intake

Few people realise that eating sugar promotes the production of cholesterol in the body. The recommended daily intake for added sugar (not naturally occurring sugars in fresh fruits, vegetables and milk sugar), as issued by the World Health Organisation, is 6 teaspoons per day. On average, Australians are having around 27 teaspoons per day! If you eliminate added sugars from your diet for a while, your tastebuds will adjust and you'll find that the more natural foods actually taste sweet.

7. Get moving

There's a direct correlation between a person's level of physical activity and their cholesterol levels. Exercise has been shown to decrease total cholesterol while improving HDL cholesterol.

8. Limit alcohol and quit smoking

Alcohol is known to elevate triglycerides in the blood which increase LDL cholesterol levels so it's best to steer clear, or at least stick to the guidelines and definitely avoid binge drinking. Everyone knows smoking is bad for your health but it also increases the ability of LDL cholesterol to get into artery cells and cause damage.

9. Drink tea

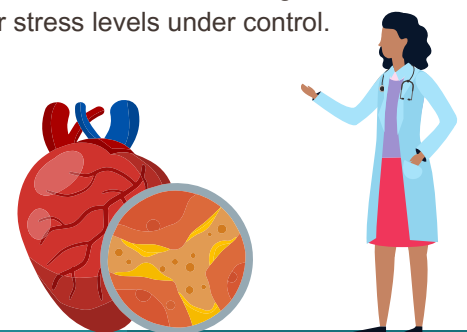
If you drink a lot of coffee every day (ie. more than the recommended <4 cups a day), then making the switch to tea, or at least swapping a coffee or two for green or black tea could help to lower your cholesterol. Researchers believe that catechins, a type of antioxidant found in tea, are responsible for its cholesterol-lowering effect.

10. Eat more onion, herbs and spices

Many herbs and spices are loaded with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity, which are great for your heart. In particular, garlic, onion, ginger and turmeric are all proven heart-friendly culinary herbs and spices.

11. Manage stress levels

The link between stress and the production of cholesterol is well-established, so take time to relax. Regular relaxation will help to keep your stress levels under control.



08 8354 9800



bookings@chg.net.au



www.chg.net.au



103 Henley Beach Rd Mile End
SA 5031