High Cholesterol
and Heart Disease and Stroke

High cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Keeping your cholesterol under control can decrease your risk of having a heart attack or a stroke.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body. Cholesterol helps the body function normally, but when you have too much of it, the excess is deposited in your arteries, which supply blood to vital organs including your heart and brain. This can lead to heart disease and stroke.

High blood cholesterol has no symptoms. A simple blood test called a lipoprotein profile will indicate if your cholesterol is high. Adults over the age of 20 should have the test at least every five years to monitor their cholesterol levels.
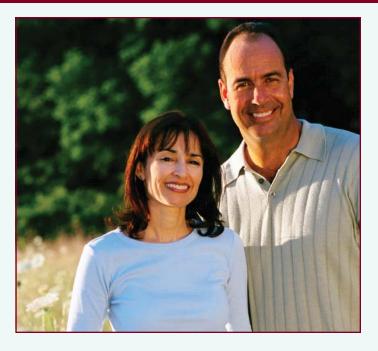
The test will indicate your:
- Total cholesterol level
- LDL cholesterol (commonly known as bad cholesterol) – creates the main source of cholesterol buildup and blockage in your arteries
- HDL cholesterol (commonly known as good cholesterol) – helps keep cholesterol from building up in your arteries
- Triglycerides – another form of fat in the blood

You must fast between nine and 12 hours before having a lipoprotein profile test.

When is cholesterol considered high?

A total cholesterol level of less than 200 is desirable. A level of 200 to 239 is borderline high, while a level of 240 and above is considered high.

An LDL cholesterol level of less than 100 is desirable. A reading of 160 to 189 is high, and a level of 190 or above is very high. HDL cholesterol should be 60 or higher. A reading below 40 for men or 50 for women is too low for optimum health.

How can high cholesterol be controlled ?

You can do a number of things to help keep your cholesterol at a healthy level:
- Know your cholesterol numbers.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your health care provider.
- Be physically active at least 30 minutes a day on most days.
- Eat a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid smoking and excess alcohol use.

More information can be found at:
health.mo.gov/cholesterol
health.mo.gov/heartdisease
health.mo.gov/stroke

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