

# Cholesterol



## What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that's found in the body. Your body needs some cholesterol to make hormones, vitamin D for strong bones, muscles and overall health. Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. However, cholesterol is also found in some of the foods you eat.

There are two main types of cholesterol: high density lipoprotein (HDL) and low density lipoprotein (LDL).

**Good cholesterol:** HDL cholesterol is the measure of 'good' cholesterol. HDL picks up excess cholesterol in the blood and takes it to the liver where it is broken down.

**Bad cholesterol:** LDL cholesterol is a measure of 'bad' cholesterol in the blood. Over time, LDL cholesterol can build up in your blood vessels and arteries, blocking the flow of blood.

Total cholesterol is a measure of all the different types of fats in the blood. Abnormal or high total cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

## What causes high cholesterol?

Eating foods rich in saturated fats will increase the amount of LDL cholesterol in the body, which is a risk factor in cardiovascular disease.

## What are the risk factors?

- > A diet high in saturated and trans fats
- > Smoking
- > High blood pressure
- > Being overweight
- > Having diabetes
- > Family history of high cholesterol



# Cholesterol

## What are the symptoms?

High cholesterol has no symptoms. A simple screening (finger prick) can give a good indication of your cholesterol and if needed followed up with a diagnostic test.

## How can I reduce my risk of high cholesterol?

- > If you smoke, try and quit
- > Choose smaller portions and fewer kilojoules
- > Eat more fruit and vegetables
- > Make water your drink
- > Be active every day
- > Sit less and move more
- > Limit alcohol intake
- > Get your doctor or health worker to check your blood pressure at each visit
- > Maintain a healthy weight range
- > Take all of your prescribed medication
- > Get your cholesterol levels checked yearly

## For more information

Contact your local Aboriginal Medical Service or Health worker. Aboriginal Chronic Care workers are located in NSW Health Services and some Aboriginal Medical Services.

PDF's can be downloaded and printed from Chronic Care for Aboriginal People Program:  
[www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/ccap](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/ccap)

Email: [ACI-CCAP@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ACI-CCAP@health.nsw.gov.au)

Adapted with permission from Daruk AMS, Mt Druitt  
© NSW Ministry of Health 2004

## Facts

High cholesterol can lead to cardiovascular disease, a dangerous accumulation of cholesterol and other deposits on the walls of your arteries. These deposits (plaques) can reduce blood flow through your arteries, which can cause complications, such as:

- > Chest pain
- > Heart attack
- > Stroke

## Free services

- > **Get Healthy Service**  
Call the 'Get Healthy Service' for free personal telephone coaching to support you with your physical activity goals'. Your free NSW Health service provides the expertise and motivation you need to help reach your goals.  
[www.gethealthynsw.com.au](http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au)  
or call 1300 806 258
- > **NSW Health Make Healthy Normal**  
[www.makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au](http://www.makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au)



**ACI** NSW Agency  
for Clinical  
Innovation



Published Sep 2016. Next review 2024.  
© State of NSW (Agency for Clinical Innovation) CC-ND-BY