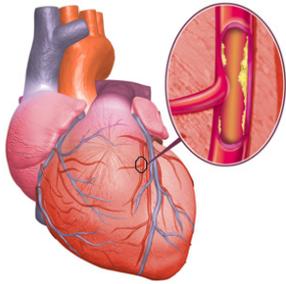


Good and bad cholesterol

Autor WEbMD

Srijeda, 26 Travanj 2023 08:21



What Is Cholesterol? We may associate cholesterol with fatty foods, but most of the waxy substance is made by our own bodies. The liver produces 75% of the cholesterol that circulates in our blood. The other 25% comes from food. At normal levels, cholesterol actually plays an important role in helping cells do their jobs. But cholesterol levels are precariously high great deal of population.

Symptoms of High Cholesterol

High cholesterol does not cause any symptoms. But it does cause damage deep within the body. Over time, too much cholesterol may lead to a buildup of plaque inside the arteries. Known as atherosclerosis, this condition narrows the space available for blood flow and can trigger heart disease. The good news is high cholesterol is simple to detect, and there are many ways to bring it down.

Cholesterol Testing

People older than 20 should have their cholesterol levels checked at least once every four to six years. This is done with a simple blood test known as a fasting lipid profile. It measures the different forms of cholesterol that are circulating in the blood after you avoid eating for nine to 12 hours. The results show your levels of "bad" cholesterol, "good" cholesterol, and triglycerides.

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Guidelines for cholesterol have changed over time. The most important factor is not necessarily measured by a number but your overall risk for heart disease and/or stroke.

"Bad" Cholesterol

Most of the cholesterol in the blood is carried by proteins called low density lipoproteins or LDL. This is known as bad cholesterol because it combines with other substances to clog the arteries. A diet high in saturated fats and trans fats tends to raise the level of LDL cholesterol. For most people, an LDL score below 100 is healthy, but people with heart disease may need to take medications to lower their LDL.

"Good" Cholesterol

Up to a third of blood cholesterol is carried by high-density lipoproteins or HDL. This is called good cholesterol because it helps remove bad cholesterol, preventing it from building up inside the arteries. The higher the level of HDL cholesterol, the better. People with too little are more likely to develop heart disease. Eating healthy fats, such as olive oil, may help boost HDL cholesterol.

Triglycerides

The body converts excess calories, sugar, and alcohol into triglycerides, a type of fat that is carried in the blood and stored in fat cells throughout the body. People who are overweight, inactive, smokers, or heavy drinkers tend to have high triglycerides, as do those who eat a very high-carb diet. A triglycerides score of 150 or higher puts you at risk for metabolic syndrome, which is linked to heart disease and diabetes.

Total Cholesterol

Total cholesterol measures the combination of LDL, HDL, and VLDL (very low density

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lipoprotein) in your bloodstream. VLDL is a precursor of LDL, the bad cholesterol. Your total cholesterol number should be looked at together with other risk factors for heart attack.

Cholesterol in Food

Cholesterol-rich foods, like eggs, shrimp, and lobster are no longer completely forbidden. Research shows that the cholesterol we eat has only a small effect on blood cholesterol levels for most people. A few people are "responders," whose blood levels spike up after eating eggs. But for most, saturated fat and trans fats are bigger concerns. Daily cholesterol limits are 300 mg for healthy people and 200 mg for those at higher risk. One egg has 186 mg of cholesterol.

Cholesterol and Family History

Cholesterol comes from two sources -- the body and food -- and either one can contribute to high cholesterol. Some people inherit genes that trigger too much cholesterol production. For others, diet is the main culprit. Saturated fat and cholesterol occur in animal-based foods, including meat, eggs, and dairy products made with milk. In many cases, high cholesterol stems from a combination of diet and genetics.

What Boosts Your Risk?

Several factors can make you more likely to develop high cholesterol:

- A diet high in saturated fats and cholesterol
- A family history of high cholesterol
- Being overweight or obese
- Getting older

Treatment: Medications

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If high cholesterol runs in your family, diet and exercise may not be enough to get your numbers where you want them. In that case, medication can give cholesterol levels an extra nudge. Statins are usually the first choice. They block the production of cholesterol in the liver. Other options include cholesterol absorption inhibitors, and bile acid resins. Your doctor may recommend a combination of these medications.

Treatment: Supplements

Certain dietary supplements may help improve cholesterol levels. These include

- Plant sterols
- Barley and oats
- Fiber
- and Green tea.

Herbal Remedies

Some studies suggest garlic can knock a few percentage points off total cholesterol. But garlic pills can have side effects and may interact with medications. Other herbs that may reduce cholesterol include:

- Fenugreek seeds
- Artichoke leaf extract
- Yarrow
- Holy basil

Can the Damage Be Undone?

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It takes years for high cholesterol to clog the arteries with plaque. But there is evidence that atherosclerosis can be reversed, at least to some degree. Dean Ornish, MD, has published several studies showing that a low-fat vegetarian diet, stress management, and moderate exercise can chip away at the build-up inside the coronary arteries. Other research supports the idea that big drops in cholesterol can somewhat help open clogged arteries.

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