

July is Cholesterol Awareness Month

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in your blood. According to the Mayo Clinic, your body needs cholesterol to build healthy cells, but high levels of cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. High cholesterol can be inherited, but it's usually the result of unhealthy lifestyle choices which can be prevented and treated.

LDL (Low-density Lipoprotein) – BAD cholesterol – LDL transports cholesterol particles throughout your body. LDL cholesterol builds up in the walls of your arteries causing plaque, making them hard and narrow, which can reduce blood flow, cause blood clots or break off and cause a heart attack or stroke.

HDL (High-density Lipoprotein) – GOOD cholesterol – HDL picks up excess cholesterol and takes it back to your liver, where your liver removes it from your body.

Triglycerides – Your body converts excess calories into triglycerides and stores them as fat. Excess triglycerides in your blood can increase your risk for heart disease.

Cholesterol Fact vs. Fiction

Fiction: Only adults get high cholesterol.

Fact: Children and teens can have high cholesterol. More than one-fifth of American kids age 12-19 have high LDL, or "bad cholesterol."

Fiction: All cholesterol is bad.

Fact: High levels of HDL (high-density lipoproteins) are a good thing, as it decreases your risk of developing a heart condition.

Fiction: I can sense when my cholesterol is getting high.

Fact: Without signs or symptoms, the only way to tell if your cholesterol is high is by getting a blood test.

Fiction: Skinny people don't get high cholesterol.

Fact: Overweight people are more likely to have high

cholesterol, but anybody can get it.

Fiction: Women don't need to worry about high cholesterol.

Fact: High cholesterol affects both men and women and it's more likely to rise as people age.

Fiction: I maintain a healthy diet and exercise, so high cholesterol doesn't affect me.

Fact: Other factors, such as being overweight, getting older and heredity can also affect cholesterol levels.

Fiction: I take medicine for my cholesterol, so I don't have to adjust my lifestyle.

Fact: Medicine can help manage cholesterol levels, but diet and exercise can help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.

[Click here for a link to the full article.](#)



Know Your Numbers!

Per Quest Diagnostics, following are normal ranges. Are you in range?

| Screening | Range |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Total Cholesterol | 125-199 |
| HDL Cholesterol – Men | >40 |
| HDL Cholesterol – Women | >46 |
| LDL Cholesterol | <130 |
| Triglycerides | <150 |



What causes high cholesterol?

- Unhealthy Diet
- Obesity
- Lack of Exercise
- Smoking
- Age
- Diabetes

How can you improve your cholesterol?

Eat a heart healthy diet

- Choose healthier fats – Opt for leaner cuts of meat, low-fat dairy and monounsaturated fats such as olive and canola oils (for lower LDL).
- Eliminate Trans Fats found in fried foods and processed foods such as cookies, crackers and packaged snacks (helps LDL and HDL).
- Eat plenty of soluble fiber such as whole grains, fruits, legumes and vegetables to help lower your LDL.
- Eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, tuna and mackerel to raise your HDL level.
- Do not overeat and limit sugar and simple carbohydrates to keep your triglycerides in check.

Become more physically active – Sedentary lifestyles lower HDL which means there's less good cholesterol to remove LDL from your arteries.

Lose weight – Being overweight can raise your LDL and lower your HDL. Losing excess weight can improve your cholesterol levels.