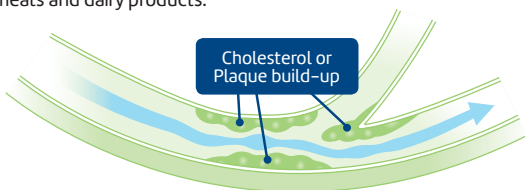


High Cholesterol

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy fat (lipid) that is made by the body. It is found in the bloodstream and in all of your body's cells. Your body needs cholesterol to form cell membranes, some hormones and vitamin D. Cholesterol is also found in some foods, such as eggs, meats and dairy products.



How does cholesterol affect stroke risk?

Cholesterol or plaque build-up in the arteries can block normal blood flow to the brain and cause a stroke. Because cholesterol does not dissolve in the blood on its own, it must be carried to and from cells by particles called lipoproteins. There are two types of lipoproteins: **Low-density lipoproteins (LDL)** and **high density lipoproteins (HDL)**. Recent studies show that high levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol and triglycerides (blood fats) raise the risk of ischemic (clot caused) stroke. High levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol also may reduce stroke risk. Plaque can also increase risk of a mini stroke called transient ischemic stroke (TIA) where stroke symptoms go away within 24 hours.

What increases cholesterol levels?

Many things can affect cholesterol levels. Some you can change and some you can't.

THINGS YOU CAN CHANGE:

Diet – Foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol can increase cholesterol levels



Weight – Being overweight can increase your cholesterol levels



Exercise – People who are not active tend to have higher cholesterol levels



THINGS YOU CANNOT CHANGE:

Family history – If someone in your family has high cholesterol, you are more likely to have high cholesterol



Age – Most people experience an increase in cholesterol levels until the age of 65



Gender – Women under age 50 tend to have lower cholesterol and those in menopause have higher levels



How often should I be checked for high cholesterol?

- ✓ All adults age 20 and older should have their cholesterol checked at least once every five years.
- ✓ Cholesterol should be checked more frequently in men older than 45 and women older than 55.
- ✓ People with a family history of high cholesterol should also be checked more often.

What can I do to manage my cholesterol?

Eat a healthy diet

Good eating habits not only can help lower your cholesterol but also may reduce other stroke risk factors such as high blood pressure and being overweight.

- ✓ Eat low-fat foods – especially foods low in saturated fat. This includes vegetables, fruits, lean meats such as chicken and fish, low-fat dairy products and a limited number of egg yolks.
- ✓ Bake, broil, steam or grill your food (instead of frying).
- ✓ Add fibre to your diet, including whole grains or dried beans.

Include exercise in your daily routine

- ✓ Be physically active at least 30 minutes for five or more days a week.
- ✓ Every little bit of exercise – a brisk walk, bicycle ride, swim or yard work – can improve your health.
- ✓ Exercise with a friend.
- ✓ Make small changes – take the stairs instead of the elevator or park farther out in the parking lot.
- ✓ Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.



*For more Stroke and
General Health Information
please scan the QR codes*

