

Let's lunch and learn!

February 2026

If you participate in the State Health Plan, you can find a nutritionist near you by logging into your Aetna account.

Dietician visits are covered at 100 percent when an in-network provider is used. Visit www.shpnc.gov to learn more.

For future Worksite Wellness Lunch and Learn events or recordings of previous events, visit oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars.





Lifestyle Changes to Support Cholesterol Management

Presented by Katie Godin, RD, LDN

Katie Godin, RD, LDN

- Lifestyle Medical Centers offers Nutrition Counseling to assist with educating you on how to make positive lifestyle changes alongside continual support and encouragement.
- **Services offered:**
- Weight Management
- Women's Health
- Sports Nutrition
- Chronic Disease Counseling
- Bariatric Support
- Smoking Cessation
- Sleep Assessment and Stress Management
- <https://lifestylemedicalcenters.com/>



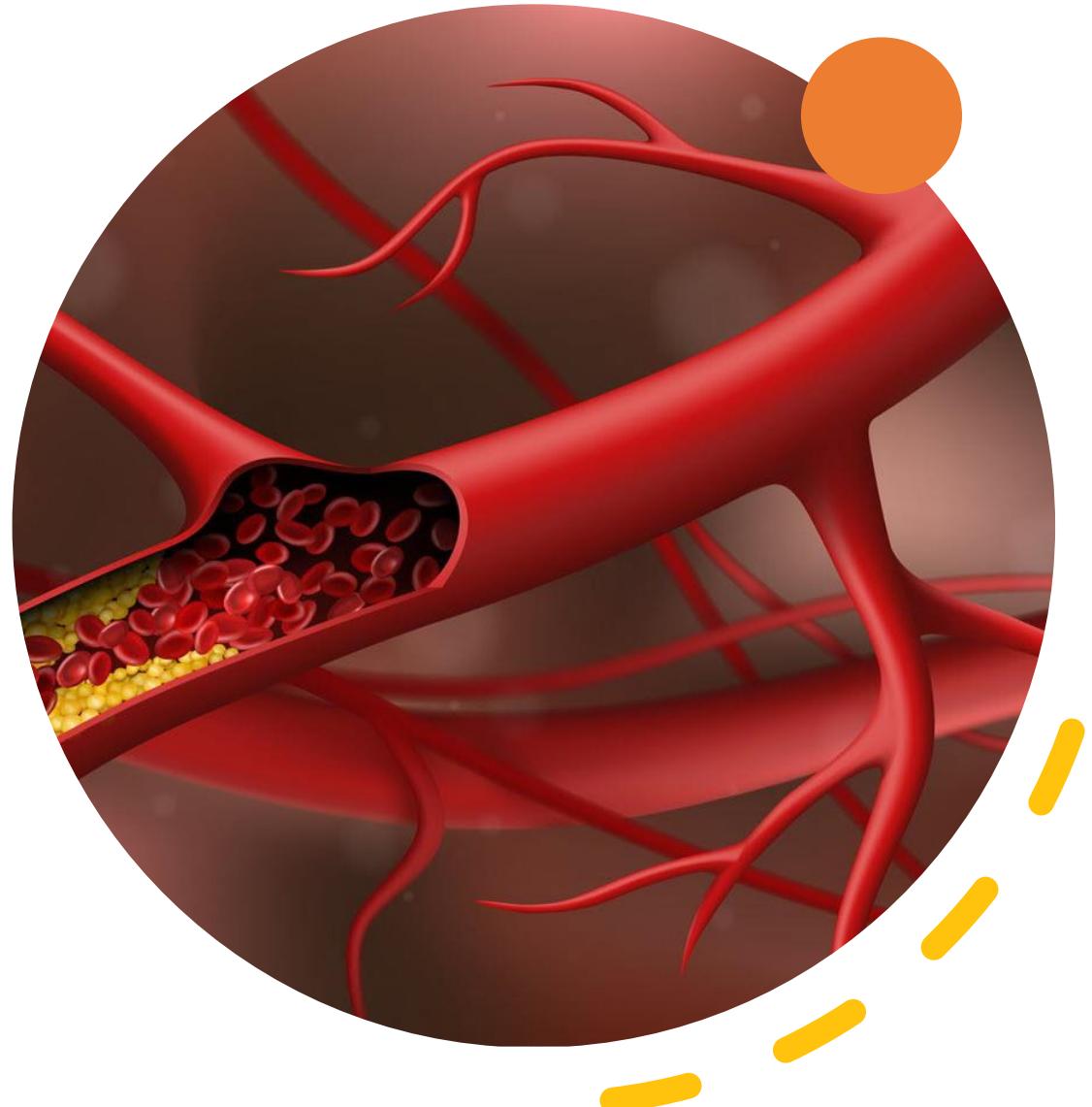
What is Cholesterol?

A waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver, and found in the blood and in all cells of the body.

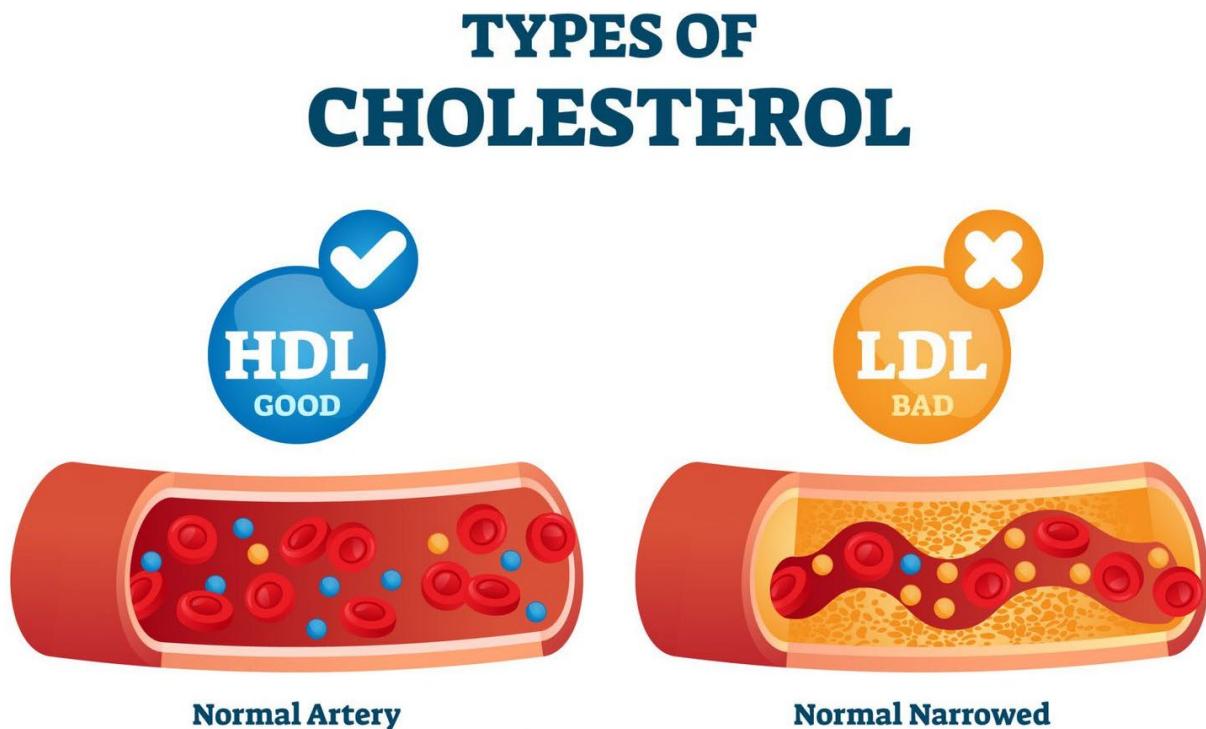
Your liver makes all the cholesterol you need. The remainder of the cholesterol in your body comes from foods from animals.

We need cholesterol to make bile (help digest food), to serve as a building block for certain hormones and to give structure for cell membranes, aiding with what can enter/leave the cells.

Too much cholesterol can pose a problem. About 38% of American adults have high cholesterol (total blood cholesterol \geq 200 mg/dL) according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Types of Cholesterol



LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein) or “Bad” Cholesterol is responsible for carrying cholesterol to the cells that need it. Too much of this type of cholesterol in your blood causes the buildup of fatty deposits (plaques) in your arteries which reduces blood flow. If a plaque(s) ruptures, it can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) or “Good” Cholesterol helps carry away the LDL cholesterol back to the liver, keeping arteries open and your blood flowing smoothly.

What about Total Cholesterol? What makes up this number?

- Total cholesterol is the sum of your blood's different types of cholesterol
- This will include
 - HDL + LDL + 20% of TG

$$\begin{array}{|c|c|}\hline & \text{LDL} + \text{HDL} + (\text{triglyceride}/5) \\ \hline & = \text{Total Cholesterol} \\ \hline\end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{|c|c|}\hline & \text{LDL} - 100 \\ \hline & \text{HDL} - 70 \\ \hline & \text{Triglyceride} - 150 \\ \hline\end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{|c|c|}\hline & \underline{100 + 70 + (150/5)} \\ \hline\end{array}$$

What about Triglycerides?



Triglycerides are the primary form of fat in the body.

When you eat, your body converts calories it doesn't need into triglycerides and are stored in fat cells and eventually used as energy. Higher than desired levels of triglycerides contribute to hardening of arteries, increasing risk of CVD (Heart attack / Stroke).

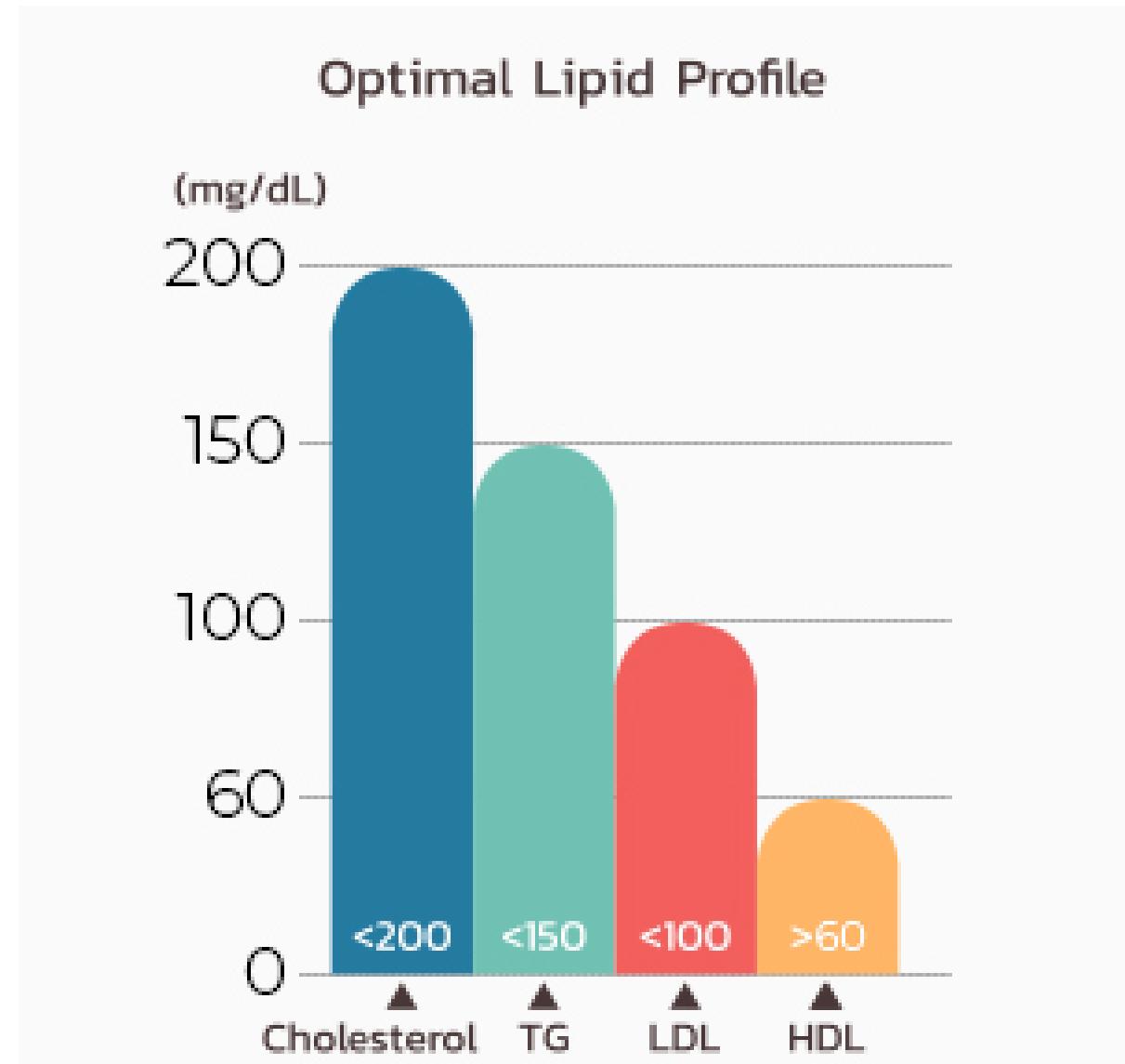
Being overweight, eating too many processed sugary foods, drinking too much alcohol, smoking, being sedentary, or having diabetes with elevated blood sugar levels can lead to high Triglycerides.

A photograph showing a white laboratory rack filled with numerous blood test tubes. The tubes are arranged in several rows, with their caps facing the viewer. The colors of the caps are varied, including orange, white, blue, purple, and yellow. The rack is positioned on the left side of the slide, with the text on the right.

Lipid Panel Testing: What's included?

- Total Cholesterol
- HDL
- LDL
- Triglycerides
- We test in house at LMC within your first 2 visits.

Desired Lipid Panel measurements





Who's at risk?

Risk factors for high cholesterol include:

A family history of high cholesterol or heart attacks

Being Overweight

Being physically inactive

Diabetes

Poor diet

Cigarette smoking

How often should you have your lipids checked?

Most healthy adults should have their cholesterol checked every 4 – 6 years at a minimum. Ideally annually at your physical with your PCP.

Individuals who have heart disease, diabetes, or a family history of high cholesterol, should get their cholesterol checked more often and should talk with their healthcare provider for guidance.

Children and adolescents should have their cholesterol checked at least once between ages 9 – 11 and again between ages 17 – 21 years or more or according to their healthcare provider's recommendation.

For men ages 45-65 and women 55-65, a lipid panel should be done every 1-2 years. Individuals over 65 should consider getting a test annually.

If you have had an abnormal test, are taking cholesterol-lowering medications, or you're at higher risk of coronary artery disease due to risk factors, more frequent testing than those recommended above may be needed.

Dietary and Lifestyle changes





Tips for Lowering Total Cholesterol and LDL

Limit

- Limit trans & saturated fat. Replace with Unsaturated Fats.

Aim

- Aim for AT LEAST 25-38g of dietary fiber each day (women-men, respectively).

Choose

- Choose more heart-healthy fats and eat at least one omega-3 fat every day.

Cut back

- Cut back on “low-fat”, “reduced-fat”, and “fat-free” processed foods.



How to Get 30g Fiber in A Day

- $\frac{1}{2}$ dry oats (4g)
- **2 Tbsp Chia (8-10g)**
- 1 large apple (5g)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chickpeas (6g)
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ avocado (5-7g)**
- 1 cup brussels (3g)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Sweet potato (2g)
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ cup black beans (7g)**
- 1 cup broccoli (5g)
- **1 cup raspberries (8g)**
- 2 Tbsp ground flaxseed (4g)
- 1 slice whole grain bread (2g)
- 1 cup leafy greens (1-2g)

Tips for Lowering Total Cholesterol and LDL

The American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium to <1,500 mg per day if:

- You are an adult over the age of 50
- You have Diabetes
- You are African American
- You have high blood pressure

Maintain a healthy weight

5-10% weight loss, if overweight

Aim for at least 30 min of cardiovascular activity most days of the week along with 2 days of strength/resistance training. **The more you exercise, the more LDL your body expels.**





Strategies to increase HDL

Participate in

- Participate in regular physical activity.

Replace

- Replace saturated & trans fats with unsaturated fats & omega-3's.

Increase

- Increase fiber intake from plants.

Quit

- Quit smoking, if applicable.

Maintain

- Maintain a healthy weight (BMI < 25).

Strategies to lower Triglycerides

1. Maintain a healthy weight

- 5-10% weight loss, if overweight
- Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week



2. Choose foods that contain healthy fat and are low in refined carbohydrates

- Limit refined carbohydrates: white rice, white bread, enriched pasta, etc.
- Avoid added sugar: sweets, candy, pastries, cakes, cookies, regular soda, juices
- Focus on more Omega 3 fats. Ask your provider if a supplement would be beneficial.

3. Limit alcohol consumption

4. Blood sugar control

- If you have diabetes, good blood sugar control can help reduce your triglycerides



Stress and Sleep's Roll on Cholesterol Levels

- Poor sleep can:
 - Raise LDL
 - Increase Blood Pressure
 - Affect Metabolism/Weight
 - Increase Inflammation
- Stress can affect cholesterol by:
 - Keeping cortisol elevated
 - Increased blood pressure/heart rate
 - Developing unhealthy coping mechanisms
 - Increasing inflammation



How to Improve Sleep / Stress Management

- Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Focus on what you have control over!
- Daily movement can help with both sleep quality and stress.
- Time outdoors (morning sun is beneficial for melatonin production in evening).
- Consistent bedtime routine.
- Social Connection
- Deep breathing / meditation / journaling before bed.

Remember!

Schedule regular check-ups with your healthcare provider to monitor your heart health and assess your risk factors for heart disease. Screenings such as cholesterol tests, blood sugar tests, and heart health assessments can help detect issues early and prevent complications.



Handouts to
review :



Lipid Lowering Strategies



Healthy Fat Basics



Choosing Oils



High Fiber Products to Look For

References:

- <https://aanmc.org/featured-articles/heart-health/>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/can-stronger-muscles-pump-up-your-heart-health>
- <https://www.dietdoctor.com/cholesterol/triglycerides>
- <https://santiamhospital.org/american-heart-month-unlock-heart-health-this-february/>



Thank
you!



Let's Cook!

Chocolate Covered Stuffed Dates

[Chocolate Covered Stuffed Dates - Skinnytaste](https://www.skinnytaste.com/chocolate-covered-stuffed-dates/)