



# High Cholesterol & Nutrition

**Cholesterol** is a waxy, fat-like substance the body needs to work properly. Cholesterol is used by the body to make cell walls, assist in food digestion, produce hormones, and help absorb vitamins. The body needs cholesterol to function, however if too much is present in the body, it may begin to build up in the blood vessels and increase the risk for heart disease.

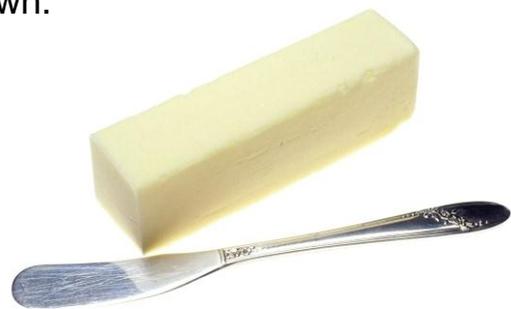
Cholesterol is made in the body, but also comes from the foods we eat. In food, cholesterol often coexists with saturated fat, especially in animal products, such as meat, dairy products, butter, eggs, shrimp, crab, etc.

There are two main types of cholesterol found in the body:

- **LDL (low-density lipoprotein)**, known as the “**bad**” cholesterol, is more likely to clog blood vessels because it carries fat away from the liver and to the rest of the body.
- **HDL (high-density lipoprotein)**, known as the “**good**” cholesterol, carries fat back to the liver where it is broken down.

Some causes of high cholesterol include:

- **Family history**
- **Diet high in cholesterol and saturated fat**
- **Health conditions** such as diabetes, hypothyroidism, and certain kidney diseases.



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### Ways to Lower Your Risk

Following a low fat diet is not needed, but the amount of total fat in the diet may need to be decreased if it is higher than what is generally recommended. In addition, **replacing sources of saturated and trans fats with healthier fats from plant and fish sources** can help reduce your risk of heart disease.

- Foods high in saturated fats include fatty meat, poultry skin, bacon, sausage, whole milk, cream, and butter.
- Trans fats are found in some meat products, deep fried foods, and packaged foods made with hydrogenated oils.

Other ways to lower cholesterol include:

- **Increase high fiber (soluble fiber in particular) foods in your diet by including at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.** Other sources of soluble fiber include oats, dried beans, and peas.
- Substitute monounsaturated fat (olive oil and canola oil) or polyunsaturated fat (sunflower oil) for saturated fat.
- **Eat more omega-3 fats (heart healthy fats):** good choices include salmon, tuna, walnuts, flaxseed, mackerel, and sardines.
- Instead of butter or stick margarine, try reduced-fat whipped spreads, oil-based spreads, or those made with yogurt.
- Use herbs and spices (e.g., Mrs. Dash) to help flavor food versus salt.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

*Additional Notes:*