



# Know your numbers

## Cholesterol health tips

**Cholesterol is a chemical in the blood that is made in the liver. It can also come from the foods we eat. While everyone has cholesterol, some cholesterol can increase your risk for a heart attack or stroke. The good news is that you can take steps to lower that risk.**

### Types of cholesterol

There are two main types of cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein and high-density lipoprotein.

- **Low-density lipoprotein.** You may have heard this called LDL cholesterol or “bad cholesterol.” It’s bad because it can build up in the arteries and cause atheroma, also known as “hardening of the arteries.” It’s also one of the main causes of chest pain, heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.
- **High-density lipoprotein.** This is also called HDL cholesterol or “good cholesterol.” That’s because it helps carry cholesterol away from the arteries. It may actually prevent hardening of the arteries.

### Who’s at risk?

Everyone has some risk for hardening of the arteries. But some people are more likely to develop this condition. Here are some of the main risk factors.

### Risk factors that can be prevented or changed:

- Smoking
- Lack of physical activity
- Obesity
- An unhealthy diet, including too much salt
- Excessive alcohol consumption

### Risk factors that can be treated:

- High blood pressure
- High levels of fat in the blood
- Diabetes
- Some kidney diseases

### Risk factors you cannot change:

- Family history, such as a father or brother with heart disease or stroke before age 55, or a mother or sister before age 65
- Gender — being male puts you at greater risk
- Early menopause in women
- Age — the older you get, the more likely you are to develop hardening of the arteries
- Ethnicity

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## Reduce your risk

Some factors create a greater risk than others. Sometimes, factors work together to increase your risk. If you have a higher risk, you may be advised to:

- Use medication to lower cholesterol and/or blood pressure
- Lose weight (especially around the waist)
- Eat a healthy diet; some foods may even help lower cholesterol
- Quit smoking
- Become more active
- Take a daily dose of aspirin (as per your general practitioner) to prevent blood clots, if there is hardening of the arteries
- Take omega-3 supplements or eat oily fish such as sardines, pilchards, mackerel, kippers or herring
- Reduce salt intake

## Do you know your numbers?

A blood test will show your LDL, HDL and other numbers. Here are some guidelines on healthy limits in both European and U.S. measurement recommendations:

	UK / Europe	USA	
<b>Total cholesterol</b>	5.0 mmol/L or less	200 mg/dl or less	Generally, the higher the level, the greater the risk
<b>LDL (after overnight fast)</b>	3.0 mmol/L or less	100 mg/dL or less	Bad cholesterol
<b>HDL</b>	1.2 mmol/L or more	60 mg/dL and higher	Good cholesterol
<b>TC/HDL ratio (TC divided by HDL)</b>	4.5 or less	3.33	For any cholesterol level, the more HDL, the better

**Take control of your cholesterol —**  
get on the path to a healthier you today.

Source: Patient UK, Cholesterol. Available at [www.patient.co.uk/health/Cholesterol.htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Cholesterol.htm). Accessed 1 March 2017.

US Total Cholesterol numbers from NHLBI accessed 24 January 2017 measured in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dl)

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc>

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc>. Accessed 1 March 2017.

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