



Live heart-healthy

Understanding and managing your cholesterol

Keeping your heart healthy is an essential part of your overall health and well-being. There are many factors that contribute to heart health. One of the most important is cholesterol. Managing your cholesterol is a great way to help protect your heart — and your health.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. Your cells need it and your body supplies it, but you also get cholesterol from the food you eat. If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in your blood vessels, which can cause them to narrow and reduce the flow of blood. It can also lead to heart attacks and strokes.

There are different types of cholesterol:

- LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, can raise your risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke.
- HDL, or “good” cholesterol, is linked to lower risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

What affects cholesterol levels?

Your cholesterol levels are the result of both lifestyle choices and aspects of health that are outside of your control. Here’s a look at what factors can impact your cholesterol:

1. **The foods you eat** – Eating too much saturated fat and trans fat can raise your cholesterol.
2. **Weight** – Being overweight may lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol.
3. **Activity** – Not exercising may lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol.
4. **Age** – Cholesterol levels can start to rise at age 20.
5. **Family history** – If family members have or had high cholesterol, you may also have it.

Stay heart-healthy by lowering your cholesterol

Lowering your cholesterol can go a long way in helping you achieve your best health. The tips below are great steps you can take to get started, but everyone's health is different, so be sure to talk to your doctor about a plan that's right for you.



Eat a healthy diet

Eat a diet rich in fruits, veggies and whole grains. Fish and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods are also smart choices.



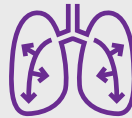
Make exercise a priority

Aim for moderate to intense activity for at least 30 minutes a day, five times a week.



Maintain a healthy weight

If you're overweight, getting to a healthy weight can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.



Quit smoking – or don't start

Avoiding tobacco, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars and pipes, is one of the best things you can do for your heart.



Manage your medicines

Your doctor may recommend a medication known as "statin" to help you lower your cholesterol. It can help if you're at a high risk for a stroke or heart attack.

It's always a good time to make heart health and lower cholesterol a priority. Get started today. To learn more, register or log in at [Aetna.com](https://www.aetna.com) and look under "Stay Healthy."

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