



Cholesterol Management General Tips

What is high cholesterol?

High cholesterol means that you have too much of certain fats in your blood called “lipids”. Cholesterol is made by your body and also comes from certain foods including meat and dairy products. **We need cholesterol - it is important for many functions in the body.** However, having certain levels that are too high can lead to the buildup of fatty deposits called plaque in artery walls. This can increase your risk of coronary artery disease (CAD), heart attack, and stroke.

Cholesterol types and optimal ranges

- **Total Cholesterol:** The overall amount of cholesterol in your blood (LDL, HDL, and others).
Goal: Generally < 200 mg/dL
- **LDL (“bad” cholesterol):** Delivers cholesterol to tissues; too much can build up in artery walls and raise heart disease risk.
Goal: < 100 mg/dL (or < 70 mg/dL for higher-risk patients)
- **HDL (“good” cholesterol):** Helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream and arteries. Higher levels are linked with lower risk for heart attack and stroke.
Goal: ≥ 50 mg/dL for women (≥ 40 mg/dL for men); higher is better
- **Triglycerides:** A form of stored fat used for energy; high levels are linked to insulin resistance and heart disease risk.
Goal: < 150 mg/dL (ideally < 100)

How to improve cholesterol levels

- Increase soluble fiber - it binds to cholesterol and helps remove it from the body
 - Good sources of soluble fiber: beans, lentils, oats, whole grains, almonds, berries, citrus fruits, pears, apples, peas, carrots
- Add in 2 tablespoons each of flaxseeds and chia seeds daily
- Increase heart healthy fats - olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds, fatty fish (salmon, trout, sardines)
- If you eat red meat regularly - choose organic, grass-fed, and grass-finished and/or switch it out a few times a week for plant based proteins
- Limit sodium and alcohol
- Limit drinks and foods with added sugar
- Do not use tobacco or nicotine products
- Aim for at least 10,000 steps daily
- Exercise regularly - ideally with strength training at least 3 times a week to maintain healthy muscle mass
- Optimize hormone balance. Perimenopause and menopausal hormone changes can adversely affect cholesterol levels
- There are a few different supplements that can be beneficial for cholesterol balance - we can discuss specific / personalized recommendations as needed