WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatlike substance in your blood. Cholesterol is essential for good health. But too much of the bad kind of cholesterol can put you at a higher risk of heart disease or stroke.

Where does cholesterol come from?

Cholesterol comes from two different places.

Blood cholesterol comes from your liver and it helps your body build cells and make vitamins and certain hormones. Your body produces all of the cholesterol it needs through this process.

Dietary cholesterol comes from foods you eat, primarily animal products like meat, eggs, cheese and milk. Dietary cholesterol can lead to health problems if it gets too high.

The bad kind of cholesterol

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol is known as the bad kind of cholesterol. High levels of LDL cholesterol can lead to heart disease and stroke. The AHA recom mends lower is better for LDL. Studies suggest an ideal LDL level at or below 100 mg/dL. Adults who maintain this level have lower rates of heart disease and stroke.

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The good kind of cholesterol

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is the good kind of cholesterol. High levels of HDL cholesterol can reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Triglycerides contribute to high cholesterol

Triglycerides are a type of fat in your body. A high level of triglycerides can contribute to problematic cholesterol buildup in your body.

Check your cholesterol to avoid a heart attack or stroke

If too much bad cholesterol is circulating in your blood, it can build up inside the arteries that feed your heart and brain. If the cholesterol buildup gets too thick, it can trap blood clots in your arteries and lead to a heart attack or stroke.

It s important to check your cholesterol to make sure you re at a healthy level and healthy lifestyle habits like eating a healthy and balanced diet, moving your body, and eliminating tobacco use can all help you better manage your cholesterol levels. Remember to speak with your health care professional about the best treatment plan for you.

Learn more at heart.org/cholesterol

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