

# Cholesterol: Just the Facts

Cholesterol is a big worry for many people. You may have been told by your doctor that your cholesterol is high, but what does that actually mean? What IS cholesterol? How can it impact your health? Are there changes you can make to your diet or lifestyle to lower your cholesterol and reduce the risk of developing heart disease? Keep reading to get the facts on cholesterol.

## What is cholesterol?

Blood cholesterol is produced by the liver, and helps to create some hormones and digest fatty foods.

Dietary cholesterol is found in animal foods, like meat, chicken, eggs and dairy products. It is also found in coconut and palm oils.

The more dietary cholesterol you ingest, the higher your blood cholesterol numbers can be.

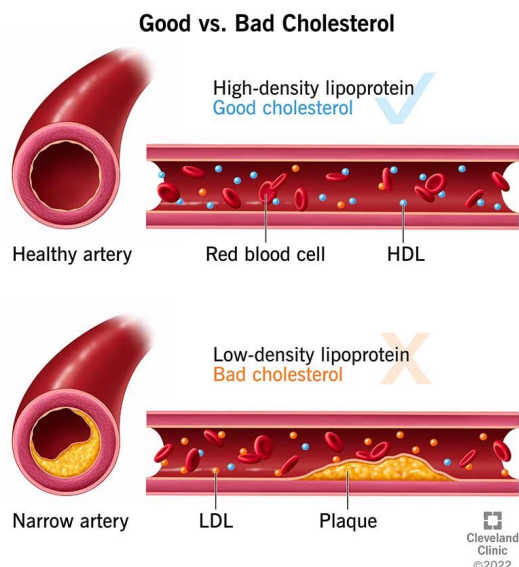
## What do the different cholesterol numbers mean?

Low-density Lipoprotein (LDL) or “bad” cholesterol: can lead to plaque buildup and heart attack or stroke; **should be under 100 mg/dL**

High-density Lipoprotein (HDL) or “good” cholesterol: the higher your level of HDL, the lower your risk of heart disease and stroke; **should be at least 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women**

Triglycerides: a type of fat found in the blood, made from extra calories that the body “saves” for later; **should be less than 150 mg/dL**

Total Cholesterol: the total amount of cholesterol in the blood, based on HDL, LDL and triglycerides; **should be under 150 mg/dL**



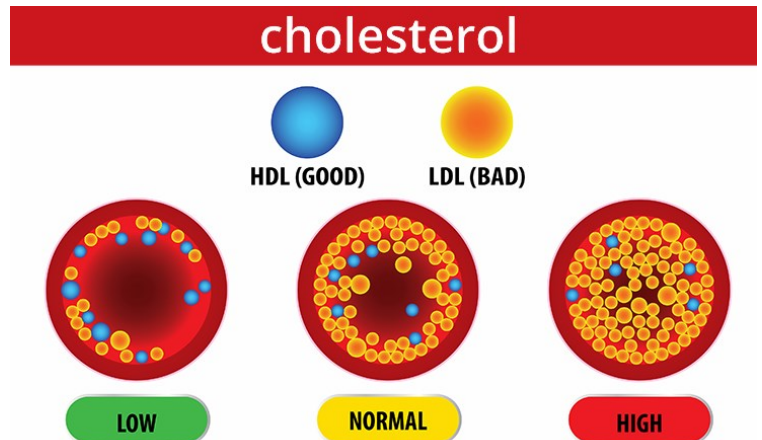
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## What are some health concerns with high cholesterol?

Heart Attack: happens when blood flow to the heart is blocked, either by a plaque buildup or a blood clot

Stroke: similar to a heart attack, happens when blood flow to the brain is blocked

Heart Disease: caused by plaque buildup; can result in chest pain, fatigue, swelling, shortness of breath and/or heart palpitations

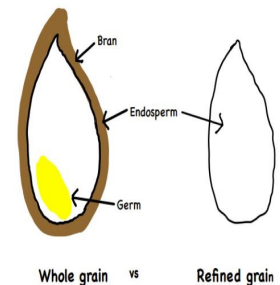


## What changes can I make to my diet to improve my cholesterol numbers?

Increase your intake and variety of fruits and vegetables: these foods contain soluble fiber, which takes some cholesterol out through the digestive system, and provide lots of different vitamins and minerals



Eat whole grains: foods like oats, brown rice and barley are a great source of soluble fiber



Go nuts: eating a handful of walnuts, almonds or other nuts can help lower LDL, as well as provide nutrients like magnesium and potassium

Limit red meat and eat more fatty fish: species like salmon, tuna and sardines contain Omega-3 fatty acids, which can help to reduce triglycerides



## Slow Cooker Harvest Beef Stew

Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

Makes 6 Servings, 2 cups each

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. bottom round beef roast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 large russet potato, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 medium sweet potato, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 cups thinly sliced carrots
- 10 oz frozen pearl onions
- 1 14.5-oz can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 14.5-oz can fat-free, low sodium beef broth
- 1 cup water
- 3/4 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 10 oz frozen peas
- 2 tbsp dried parsley



### Directions:

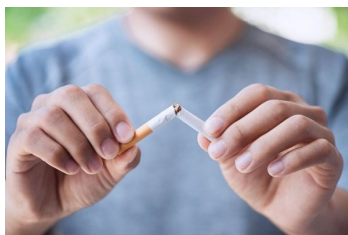
1. Add the beef, potato and flour to a 4– to 6-quart slow cooker, stirring well to combine.
2. Add the sweet potato and carrots to the slow cooker. Top with the onions, tomatoes, broth, water, thyme and pepper.
3. Cook, covered, on low heat for 10-12 hours or high heat for 5-6 hours. Quickly stir in the peas and parsley. Re-cover the slow cooker, and cook for 5-10 additional minutes. Serve.

### Nutrition Facts (per 2-cup serving):

311 Calories	4g Total Fat	45mg Cholesterol	211mg Sodium
42g Total Carbohydrates		7g Fiber	11g Sugars
24g Protein			

## Lifestyle Changes to Improve Cholesterol Numbers

Get Moving! Aim to be physically active for 30 minutes a day, most days of the week



Quit smoking: studies have show benefits as soon as the DAY after quitting smoking



Limit alcohol intake: binge drinking (at least 4 drinks for women and 5 for men in a single occasion) or heavy drinking (at least 8 drinks per week for women and 15 for men) can increase cholesterol and risk of developing heart disease



**Resources:** <https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/about/index.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/in-depth/triglycerides/art-20048186#:~:text=Triglycerides%20are%20a%20type%20of,triglycerides%20for%20energy%20between%20meals.>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/11-foods-that-lower-cholesterol>

<https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/slow-cooker-harvest-beef-stew>

<https://www.cdc.gov/drinklessbeyourbest/excessivedrinking.html>

**Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments.  
For information, call 518-382-8481, #9, ext. 304**

### **Do you have questions or concerns about what to eat?**

If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County's Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible for a free consultation with Debbie Griswold, Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269 to contact or leave a message.

**Check out our website for nutrition resources: <http://ccschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors>**



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