Screening & Managing High Cholesterol

High cholesterol usually has no signs or symptoms. The only way to know whether you have high cholesterol is to get your cholesterol checked. Your healthcare team can do a simple blood test, called a **lipid profile**, to measure your cholesterol levels.

In addition to lifestyle changes, your doctor may prescribe medications, called **statins**, to help lower cholesterol levels. Talk to your health care team about steps you can take to manage your cholesterol.

Who Needs to Get Their Cholesterol Checked?

- Most healthy adults should have their cholesterol checked every 4 to 6 years.
- Some people, like those with heart disease or diabetes or who have a family history of high cholesterol, need to get their cholesterol checked more often.
- Children and adolescents may have their cholesterol checked once between ages 9 and 11 and again between ages 17 and 21.

Talk to your health care team about your health history and how often you need to have your cholesterol checked.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

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**Developed by the Texas
Heart Disease and Stroke Program**

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HIGH CHOLESTEROL

**TEXAS
Health and Human
Services** | **Texas Department of State
Health Services**

**Learn about cholesterol
and how to manage it**

What is Cholesterol?

Blood cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by your liver. Cholesterol does important jobs, like making hormones and digesting fatty foods. It also comes from eating things like meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, and dairy products.

Heart disease and stroke are the #1 and #3 leading causes of death in Texas.[1]

High Cholesterol

Having high cholesterol raises your risk for heart disease, stroke and other diseases. One in three adult Texans have high cholesterol.[2]
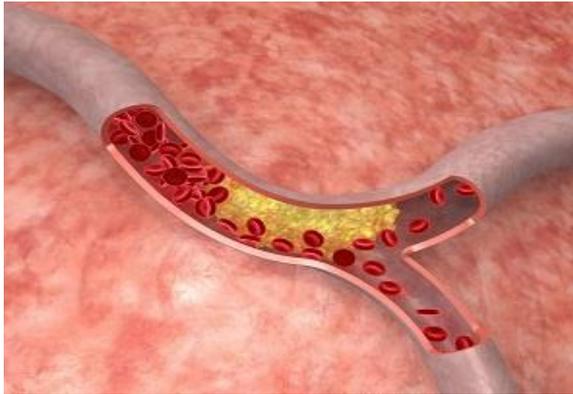
When your body has too much cholesterol, it can build up on the walls of your blood vessels. This build up is called **plaque**. As plaque builds over time, the insides of your blood vessels narrow, blocking blood flow to and from your heart and other organs.

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[1] 2016 Center for Health Statistics (CHS), Texas Department of State Health Services.
[2] Center for Health Statistics (CHS). *Texas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Austin, Texas: Texas Department of State Health Services , 2017.

Risk Factors for High Cholesterol

- Type 2 diabetes
- Obesity
- A diet high in saturated and trans fats
- Lack of physical activity
- Tobacco smoking
- Family history of high cholesterol

Bad Cholesterol vs. Good Cholesterol

Cholesterol travels through the blood on proteins called **lipoproteins**. Two types of lipoproteins carry cholesterol throughout the body:

- LDL (low-density lipoprotein), sometimes called "bad" cholesterol, makes up most of your body's cholesterol. High levels of LDL cholesterol raise your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- HDL (high-density lipoprotein), or "good" cholesterol, absorbs cholesterol and carries it back to the liver. The liver then flushes it from the body. High levels of HDL cholesterol can lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- Triglycerides are a different type of lipid that circulate in your blood. They store unused calories and provide your body with energy. High levels of triglycerides also raise your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Desirable Cholesterol Levels

Total cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL
LDL	Less than 100 mg/dL
HDL	Greater than or equal to 60 mg/dL
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL

Ways to Lower Bad Cholesterol

- Limit foods high in saturated fat
  - Examples: Cheese, fatty meats, dairy desserts, fried foods, and tropical oils, such as coconut and palm oils.
- Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium (salt), and added sugars
  - Examples: Lean meats, seafood, fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt, whole grains, and fruits & vegetables.
- Eat foods naturally high in fiber or unsaturated fats
  - Examples: Oatmeal, beans, avocado, vegetable oils and unsalted nuts.
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get regular physical activity
- Quit smoking
- Limit alcohol