

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver. It is one of the fats your body makes and is used to build cell walls and form some hormones and tissues. The body makes enough cholesterol on its own and does not need you to supplement through diet.

What are the risks of high cholesterol?

Too much cholesterol leads to the build-up of plaque on the walls of the arteries, which supply blood to the heart and other organs. Plaque can narrow the arteries and block the blood flow to the heart, causing heart problems. Cholesterol is related to health problems, including stroke.

What causes high cholesterol in children?

Cholesterol levels in children are linked to three risk factors:

- Heredity (passed on from parent to child)
- Diet
- Obesity

In most cases, children with high cholesterol have a parent who also has elevated cholesterol.

What are the symptoms of high cholesterol?

There are no symptoms of high cholesterol. Current recommendations encourage cholesterol screening in only those children, starting at 2 years old, who are at risk for having high cholesterol. Factors that would make a cholesterol screening necessary are if your child:

- has a parent with high cholesterol
- has a parent or grandparent diagnosed with heart disease before age of 55
- has an unknown family history
- is overweight

Prevent High Cholesterol

The best way to prevent or treat high cholesterol in kids is with diet and exercise for the entire family.

- Offer foods low in total fat, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. The amount of total fat consumed by those ages two and older should be 30% or less of daily total calories. Saturated fat should be less than 10% of daily calories while trans fat should be avoided.
- Exercise together. Regular aerobic exercise, such as biking, running, walking, and swimming, can help raise levels of the HDL (good) cholesterol and lower your entire family's risk for cardiovascular disease.

Fit^{for} a Kid

