



Directions for Presenters

**This slide is for people who want to present this health lesson to a group.
If you are using these slides for your own health education, please disregard this slide.**

Review all the slides and presenter notes before your presentation. If you can, print out the presenter notes to have them handy in case you need them.

Introduction: (30 seconds)

- Greet the audience.
- Introduce yourself and your topic.
- Let people know they can take pictures of any of the slides they find helpful.

At the end of your presentation:

- Thank your audience for their time and open the discussion to questions.
- If there are questions you cannot answer, please refer them to our heart.org website and social media handles for more information.

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- Review the information on the slide.
- Please do not change or add anything to these slides.

Cholesterol and Lipids

Understanding what is cholesterol and how to manage



HEALTH LESSONS
HEART.ORG | 2026

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- Introduce yourself with a warm welcome and allow for introductions.
- Share today I will be presenting a health lesson brought to you by the American Heart Association.
- The topic is Understanding Cholesterol and Lipids



WHAT WE DO

Investing in and supporting lifesaving heart and brain research for over 100 years.

FUNDED PACEMAKERS AND ICDS RESEARCH



Contributed to developing cutting-edge devices, including leadless pacemakers and wearable defibrillators.

DEVELOPMENT OF CPR GUIDELINES AND CONTINUED EFFORTS



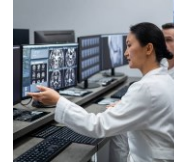
Created CPR and AED guidelines and pushing for laws to require CPR training in schools and more public AEDs to help save lives.

FUNDING HEART DISEASE RESEARCH



Investing in groundbreaking research that has led to lifesaving treatments and innovations in cardiovascular care.

FUNDING INNOVATION IN HEART DISEASE DIAGNOSTICS



Advancing imaging techniques, such as MRI and CT scans, along with biomarkers for the early detection of heart disease.

FUNDING ACUTE STROKE CARE



Funding research to support timely intervention strategies for patients with stroke, which has significantly improved survival rates and recovery outcomes.

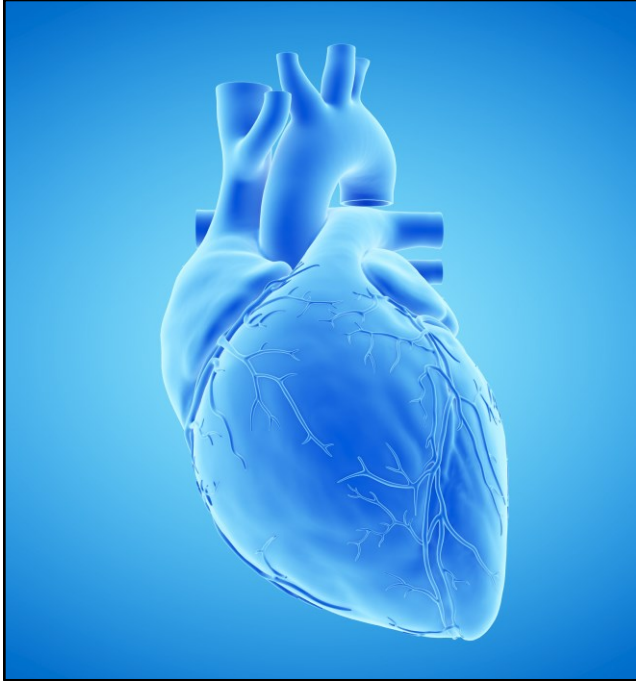
DEVELOPMENT OF HYPERTENSION GUIDELINES AND RESEARCH



Updated blood pressure guidelines with collaborators to support early detection and care. Funded research on causes, prevention and treatment.

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- The American Heart Association has been investing in and supporting lifesaving heart and brain research for over 100 years. From contributing to the development of the pacemaker, to advancing imaging techniques such as MRI and CT scans, to creating the CPR and AED guidelines, their mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.



Heart Disease

More than half of the people in the U.S. do not know that heart disease is the leading cause of death.

It kills more people than any other cause, including cancer.

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- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and globally.
- The good news is, there's a lot we can do to prevent or treat it. One of the most important steps is knowing your cholesterol levels. If it's high, learning how to manage it can make a big difference.



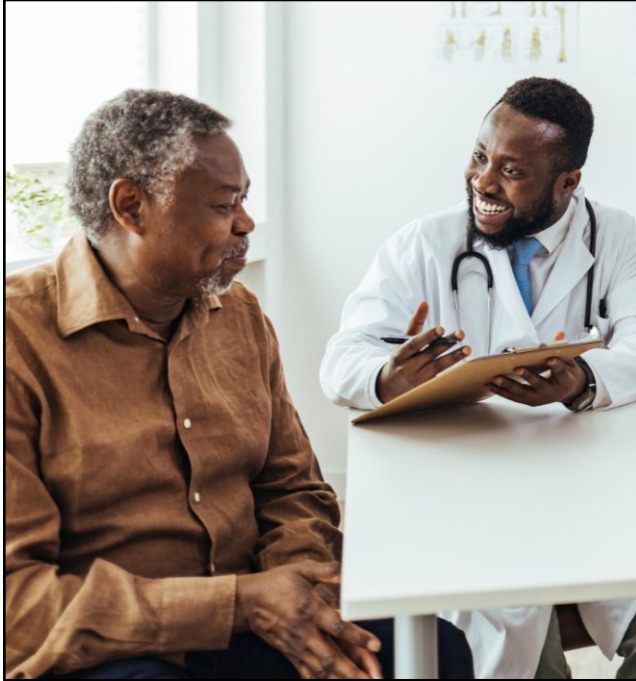
Stroke

Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the United States.

Yet approximately 80% of strokes are preventable.

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- Stroke is the 4th cause of death in the U.S. and a leading cause of disability in the U.S.
- At the same time, about 80% of strokes are preventable.



What You Will Learn

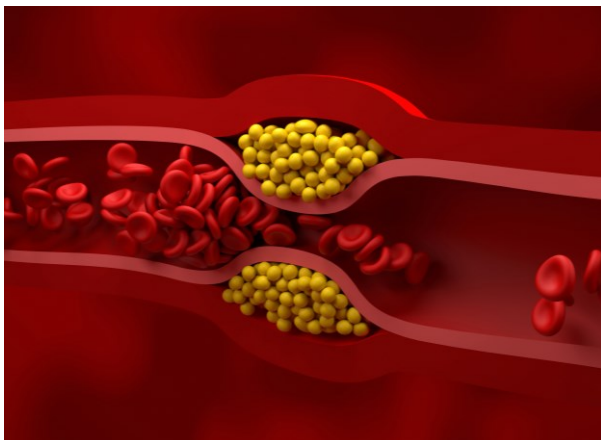
Cholesterol and Lipids

- What are they?
- How do they impact your health?
- How to manage?

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- Today, you will learn what Cholesterol and Lipids are, how they impact your health and how to manage them, including next steps for action. The lesson should take about 20-25 minutes.
- Cholesterol plays an important role for your body and finding the right balance matters for your heart health. Whether you're learning about cholesterol for the first time or exploring ways to support your heart, we're here to help you discover what works for your life.

What Is Cholesterol?



Cholesterol is a waxy substance found throughout the body.

- 1** Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs for important jobs, such as helping to build cells and make certain hormones.
- 2** When cholesterol is too high, it can put you at higher risk of heart disease and stroke.
- 3** Cholesterol comes from two sources:
 - Body: Your liver makes the cholesterol your body needs.
 - Food: Cholesterol comes from the food you eat from animals

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- Cholesterol is a waxy substance found throughout the body. In fact, your body needs it to build cells. It's not "bad" unless you have too much of it. But too much cholesterol can pose a problem.
- There are two sources of cholesterol — your body and food. Your liver makes the cholesterol your body needs, and extra cholesterol comes from animal products you eat.
- While cholesterol is an important part of a healthy body. Yet, having too much LDL or bad cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.

What is LDL Cholesterol? The “Bad” Kind



- LDL is known as the “bad” cholesterol. It is the type of cholesterol you want to keep lower. Remember **lower** LDL.
- LDL cholesterol builds up in the walls of the arteries along with fats and other substances, creating plaque.
- As plaque builds up, the wall of the blood vessel thickens. This reduces blood flow due to the narrowing of the passage. This can increase the risk of heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease (PAD).

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- LDL cholesterol is often called “bad” cholesterol because it can build up in arteries. Over time, this can narrow the arteries and increase the risk for heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease, or PAD.

What is HDL? The “Good” Kind



- HDL is the “good” cholesterol. It is the type of cholesterol you want to keep higher.
 - Remember **higher** HDL.
- HDL cholesterol carries LDL cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it can be broken down and removed from the body.
- It can also remove cholesterol from plaque buildup in the walls of your arteries and help reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke.

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- HDL cholesterol earns its “good” reputation because higher levels may help protect against heart attack and stroke.
- Think of HDL as your heart and brain’s cleanup crew, helping transport LDL “bad” cholesterol away from arteries back to your liver for processing.

What Are Triglycerides?



- Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in the body. They store excess energy from your diet.
- A high triglyceride level combined with high LDL cholesterol or low HDL cholesterol is linked with plaque buildup in the arteries, which may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

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- Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in the body. They store excess energy from your diet.
- High triglycerides can affect heart health, especially when combined with high LDL cholesterol or low HDL cholesterol.

What is Lipoprotein(a)?



- Lp(a) stands for lipoprotein(a) and is pronounced “L-P- little-a.” **Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a),** is a cholesterol-carrying lipoprotein in your blood. Your level is mostly inherited, and when it is high, it can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- According to the American Heart Association, **every adult should have their Lp(a) measured at least once in a lifetime.**
- If you or a close family member has high Lp(a), it’s important to encourage other family members, such as parents, siblings and children, to do the same. Ask your health care professional about genetic testing options such as cascade screening.

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- A high Lp(a) level can cause plaque buildup, narrowed arteries and reduced blood flow. This may increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, peripheral artery disease and aortic stenosis.
- If your Lp(a) level is high, cascade screening is recommended.

You Are Not Alone

High Cholesterol



- About 1 in 10 adults in the U.S. have high cholesterol levels of 240mg/dL or higher
- About 1 in 4 U.S. adults have high LDL cholesterol.
- About 1 in 5 people in the world have high Lp(a) levels.

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- Ask the group: Do you know someone who is managing their **cholesterol**? Why are we concerned **about cholesterol**?

Let's Talk About Risk Factors

Risk factors are things that can increase your chances of getting sick or having health problems.



What are some things **you CAN'T control** that may impact cholesterol?

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- Question for the group: What is a risk factor?
- Answer: Risk factors are traits and lifestyle habits that increase your chance of disease.
- Question for the group: What are some things that you can't change that may impact cholesterol? Give people about 2 minutes to provide answers

Things That Put You at Risk

that CAN'T be changed



Family history/Genetics



Race/ethnicity



Age



Sex

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Things that put you at risk that you cannot change

- Genetics
- Age
- Sex
- Race/ethnicity

Let's Talk About Risk Factors



What are some things
you CAN control
that might affect your
blood pressure?

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Question for the group:

- What are some things you CAN control that might affect your blood pressure? Give people about 2 minutes to provide answers.

Things That Put You at Risk

that **CAN** be changed



There are health behaviors that may raise your risk of high LDL.

These are also called risk factors.

- Eating foods high in saturated fat
- Not being physically active
- Using tobacco or nicotine products
- Being overweight

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- Here is a list of things that are in your control. These are known as controllable risk factors.
 - High blood pressure
 - Diabetes (Type 2)
 - Smoking tobacco and using nicotine products
 - Physical inactivity
 - Diet high in sodium, added sugar and saturated fat
 - Being overweight
 - Alcohol use



Cholesterol Management



The first step is to get your cholesterol checked.

- Your health care professional can do this with a blood test called a lipid panel.
- The blood test results include LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, total cholesterol and triglycerides.
- New guidance recommends that all adults get tested for Lp(a) at least once in their lifetime. The standard cholesterol test doesn't include Lp(a).
- Talk to your health care professional about adding it. A high Lp(a) level is mostly inherited, and when it is high, it can raise your risk of heart disease and stroke.

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- The first step is to check your cholesterol levels. Your health care professional can check your levels with a blood test called a lipid panel.
- The blood test includes LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, total cholesterol and triglycerides. It is also important to have your lipoprotein(a) tested once in your lifetime. A high Lp(a) level is mostly inherited, and when it is high, it can raise your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Heart-health isn't one-size-fits-all. No matter where you're starting, we are here to help you find what works for your life.

Cholesterol Management



You might consider making **small changes** to help manage your cholesterol and **reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.**

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- What can you do to manage your cholesterol? You might consider making small changes to help manage your cholesterol levels and reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. This includes:
 - Understanding your cholesterol levels
 - Knowing your risk for heart disease and stroke based on your health history
 - Not using tobacco/nicotine products
 - Eating a heart-healthy diet
 - Getting regular physical activity
 - Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight
 - Discussing your cholesterol levels and treatment plan with your health care professional

Cholesterol-Lowering Medications: When Lifestyle Isn't Enough



- In addition to adopting healthy lifestyle habits for lowering cholesterol levels, you may be prescribed a [cholesterol-lowering medication](#).
- If you have side effects, there are other medications that may be a better fit for you.

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- Adopting healthy lifestyle habits can help, but sometimes cholesterol-lowering medication is needed too. You and your health care professional can work together to discuss the best treatment options for you.

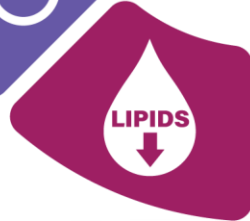


Taking Care of Your Heart and Brain

Now we are at the final part of our presentation, which is all about the next steps through the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8. These are eight simple measures that will help keep your heart and brain healthy. Four are focused on behaviors, and four are focused on numbers you need to know.

Four Numbers You Need to Know

Blood Pressure
Less than 120/80 mmHg



Blood Lipids
Less than 130 mg/dL of non-HDL cholesterol



Healthy Weight
A body mass index of less than 25



Blood Sugar
No history of diabetes and fasting blood glucose of less than 100 mg/dL (or Hemoglobin A1c < 5.7)

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Your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood sugar are the four key numbers you need to know.

Four Health Behaviors You Can Do



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The four key health behaviors are not smoking or vaping, getting adequate sleep, following a healthy diet and getting enough physical activity. These will be the first ones we focus on.

Let's Talk Food

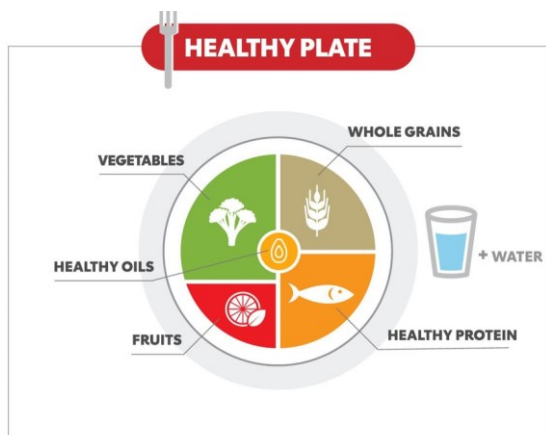


What are some easy ways to add more fruits and vegetables to meals?

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Now let's talk about food: What are some easy ways to add more fruits and vegetables to meals?

Enjoying a Healthy Diet



BUILD A HEALTHY PLATE

- ½ veggies and fruits
- ¼ whole grains such as brown rice
- ¼ protein such as beans, skinless chicken or fish



REDUCE THE SALT YOU EAT

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Eating well-balanced meals throughout the day can help your heart and brain work at their best. Don't worry about "special meals" — the best choice is a variety of healthy foods.

Eat vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, and lean animal proteins. Also, drink plenty of water throughout the day. You can also enjoy unsweetened tea or coffee.

Limit sugary drinks and alcohol. Eat fewer salty and fatty foods, as well as processed meats. Limit foods like butter, whole milk, high-fat yogurt, and cheese. Remove the skin from poultry before cooking. Use vegetable oils, such as olive, canola, or avocado oil, instead of oils like coconut or palm oil. Avoid trans fats. Trans fats are found in some store-bought baked goods and fried foods.

Two tips for success:

- Build a healthy plate. You can take a picture of this to remember what a healthy plate should look like.
- Cut back on salt. There are many salt substitutes you can use to keep your food tasty without too much salt. Salt substitutes can help lower high blood pressure.

It's also important to read nutrition labels and check serving sizes on packages. If you're looking for inspiration, the American Heart Association has hundreds of delicious, affordable recipes. Visit heart.org/recipes to explore them.

Let's Talk Exercise



What is **moderate activity**
or **vigorous activity**?

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We all know that moving more is important. The American Heart Association recommends adults should get a weekly total of at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of the two.

The Goal is to Move More



Moderate activity can include walking, dancing, gardening and even house cleaning.

Vigorous activity can include running, swimming, biking and jumping rope.

The goal is to get your heart pumping!

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity **or** 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity every week.

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Answers: Moderate activity can include walking, dancing, gardening and even house cleaning. Vigorous activity can include running, swimming, biking and jumping rope. The goal is to get your heart pumping!

Being More Active



Exercise is great for your brain!

Moving your body regularly can make you feel happier and less stressed and helps with memory!

Start small

Start with a walk around the block at lunchtime or after dinner to help you de-stress. Continue building on it until it becomes a habit.

Change your mindset

Think outside the gym! Playing with kids, dancing, gardening and mall walking all count!

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We all know that moving more is important. The American Heart Association recommends adults should get a weekly total of at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of the two. Moving more is essential. Exercise is like a workout for your heart and brain. Getting active, even just going outside for a walk, can help you feel better. It can reduce stress, improve your mood and help you feel recharged. You can do both moderate and vigorous activity and spread it throughout the week. Try to include activities that also make your muscles stronger at least twice a week. Lifting weights, squats, lunges and crunches are great examples of strength training exercises.

Two tips for success:

1. Change your mindset: Exercise isn't another to-do on your list. Think of it

as a moment you dedicate to yourself to help you unplug, recharge and clear your mind.

2. Start by making exercise a habit: Do something active every day at about the same time so it becomes a regular habit. Put it on your schedule so you're less likely to miss a day.

The key takeaway is to be patient. It can take approximately 2 months to form a habit. So stick with your exercise routine!

Let's Talk Sleep



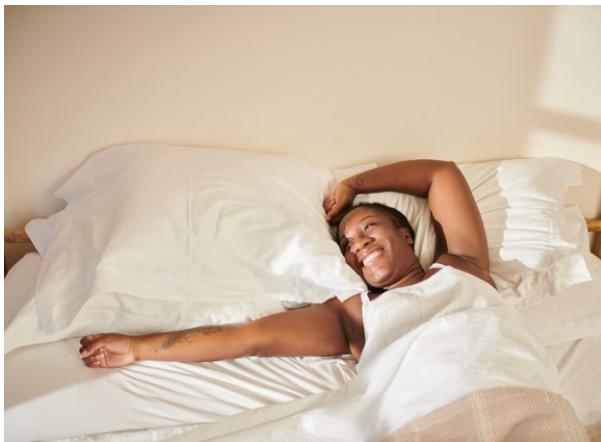
How many hours of sleep do you get?

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Let's talk about sleep: How many hours of sleep do you get on average?

Getting Enough Sleep

Aim for 7-9 hours every night



Dim It

Dimming the lights before sleep helps signal to your brain that it's time to wind down.



Set a Routine

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.

Better sleep can improve brain function, improve mood, lower the risk of chronic disease and more!

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Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to your heart and brain health. Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hours per night. Babies and kids need more depending on their age. Studies show that too little, too much sleep, or restless sleep is linked with heart disease. It is also linked to trouble thinking and remembering as you get older.

Your sleep affects your health in the following ways:

- Depression and anxiety
- Memory loss and dementia
- High blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol
- Obesity
- Heart disease

Sleep problems could be a sign that your brain needs help. Studies show that restless sleep, not getting enough sleep, or sleeping too much may be linked to memory and thinking problems later in life. Waking up frequently during the night could also be a warning sign.

Benefits of sleep:

- Better brain function, including alertness, decision-making, focus, learning, memory, reasoning and problem-solving
- Improved mood and energy

- Stronger immune system
- Healing and repairing of cells, tissues and blood vessels
- Less risk of chronic disease

Here are two tips to get a better night's sleep:

1. Dimming the lights before sleep helps signal to your brain that it's time to wind down. Dim your screen or use a red filter app at night. The bright blue light of most devices can mess with your "internal clock" and melatonin production, a hormone that regulates sleep.
2. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This helps regulate your body's internal clock and makes it easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally. Set a bedtime alarm to remind you it's time to wrap it up for the night.

The key takeaway is better sleep can improve brain function, improve mood, lower the risk of chronic disease and more!

Let's Talk Tobacco & Nicotine



Which one of these is a risk if you smoke?

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Depression and anxiety
- Premature aging
- ✓ All of the above

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The first step to quitting tobacco and or nicotine products is to understand the risks and health effects for you and your family.

- Heart disease: Nicotine and tobacco can raise blood pressure and increase heart rate. It can cause blood vessels to narrow, increasing the risk of heart attacks.
- Stroke: Nicotine and tobacco can damage blood vessels. It can increase the risk of having a stroke by causing blood clots or blocking blood flow to the brain. It can also cause memory problems and dementia later in life.
- Diabetes: Nicotine and tobacco can increase the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. For people with diabetes, it can also make it harder to manage blood sugar levels.
- Cancer: Smoking is the leading cause of cancer. Nicotine can abnormally speed up the growth of new cells. This has been shown in tumor cells in the breast, colon, and lung.
- Depression and anxiety: Nicotine and tobacco can lead to mood swings and heightened anxiety when their effects wear off.
- Premature aging: Smoking can cause premature wrinkles, skin damage, a dull complexion due to reduced blood flow and damage to the skin's elasticity.

Quitting Tobacco or Nicotine



Talk to your health care professional

They can be a partner in your plan and may suggest medications that can help you quit.

Commit to a quit day

Choose a day in the next week.

Cold turkey or gradual?

Decide if you will quit all at once or start cutting down.

Get prepared

Keep healthy snacks on hand and plan fun ways to fill your time when you feel the urge to smoke.

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Here are two tips for success:

1. Exercise can help you manage the stress and cravings when quitting. You'll feel better, too!
2. Recognizing what makes you want to smoke, vape or use nicotine is key. This can include things like stress, certain places, or social situations. Try to avoid or manage these triggers, especially at the beginning. Practice deep breathing exercises to help calm your body and mind. Slow, deep breaths can reduce stress and cravings.

The key takeaway is to get prepared. Start by creating a plan that fits your lifestyle.

- SET a quit date within the next 7 days. It is best to pick a weekday that doesn't look like it will be too stressful of a day.
- CHOOSE a method: cold turkey or gradually.
- DECIDE if you need help from a health care professional, nicotine replacement or medicine.
- PREPARE for your quit day by planning how to deal with cravings and urges.
- QUIT on your quit day.

Healthy Weight



- Increase the amount of fiber you eat and the water you drink.
- Add protein to your breakfast (if this isn't already part of your routine). Protein will help you feel full for longer.
- Avoid fast food when possible.
- Read nutritional labels for nutrition and calorie content. Pay attention to the number of serving sizes in each package.

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Calories are a type of energy. It's essential to balance the energy you get from food with the energy you use when you're active. Eating too many calories and not being active enough can lead to weight gain. Not all calories are the same. Calories from fast food don't give your body the same nutrition as calories from a healthy, home-cooked meal. To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you eat. If you think you're overeating, keep a food and activity journal to track your energy.

Here are two tips for success:

When preparing your plate, think about the portions. Remember the Eat Better slide, which shows you what a healthy plate is supposed to look like. Pay attention to the nutrition labels that show the serving sizes. For example, you might look at a bag and see 200 calories. Maybe 200 calories doesn't sound like a lot, so you eat the whole bag. What you don't realize is that the bag indicated that it is for 3 servings, so instead of eating 200 calories, you actually ate 600 calories.

Also, I can't stress enough the importance of exercise. When you're stressed, your body can produce a hormone called cortisol. This can make you feel hungrier and crave unhealthy foods. Exercise can reduce stress, helping your body stay balanced and avoid overeating.

If you are not sure if you are at a healthy weight, your health care professional can help

you decide if your weight is healthy for your age and body. A healthy weight helps your brain and heart function better.

Key Takeaways



1. High cholesterol increases your risk of heart attack and stroke.
2. Check with your health care professional to determine which screenings might be appropriate for you. Know your levels and assess your risk.
3. Understand lifestyle changes that can lower your cholesterol, such as an overall healthy eating pattern, moving your body and avoiding tobacco products.
4. Adopting healthy lifestyle habits is your first step to lower cholesterol levels. Talk to your health care team about the best treatment plan for you to help manage your cholesterol.

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High cholesterol raises the risk of heart attack and stroke. Work with your health care professional to understand which screenings you need, know your levels and assess your personal risk. Healthy lifestyle habits, such as eating a heart-healthy diet, being physically active and avoiding tobacco, are the first steps to lowering cholesterol. If lifestyle changes aren't enough, your health care team can help determine whether cholesterol-lowering medications are an appropriate as part of your treatment plan.

Additional Resources



- [What is cholesterol?](#)
- [Understanding my risk](#)
- [My Cholesterol Guide](#)

heart.org/Cholesterol

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We know we have given you a lot of information.

We are grateful for your time and hope you learned something new. Before we conclude, I want to ask you to pick 1 or 2 tips for success that we reviewed today and commit to starting them. The best way to do this is to write them down, so take out your phones or a pen and paper and type or write the two steps that you are going to take. Remember to give it about 2 months so that you can form a habit. The goal is to stick with it until it becomes part of your routine. From there, you can revisit this list and pick another 2.

Added Tip: Provide handouts or digital resources:

- [What is cholesterol?](#)
- [Understanding my risk](#)
- https://www.heart.org/-/media/Files/Health-Topics/Cholesterol/My-LDL-Cholesterol-Guide.pdf?sc_lang=en
- Links to AHA Cholesterol and healthy eating landing pages [Cholesterol](#)

and Healthy Eating

Stay In Touch



Follow us [@AmericanHeart](#) on social media and DM us to let us know how you're doing!



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Thank you for your time. I hope you enjoyed this presentation. Don't forget to follow the American Heart Association on our social media platforms and keep the Heart Association informed of your progress! And with that we end this presentation. Take care of yourself, for those you love and for you.