



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](https://www.heart.org) website and social media handles for more information.

Cholesterol and Lipids

Understanding what is cholesterol and how to manage



HEALTH LESSONS
HEART.ORG | 2026

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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.



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.

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.



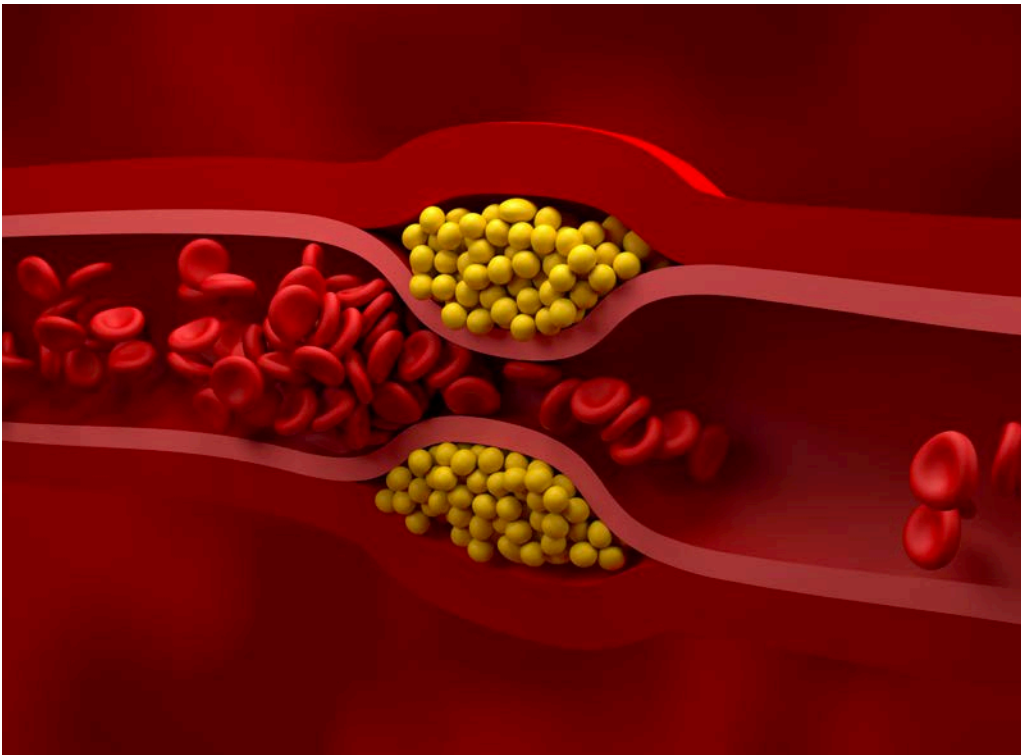
What You Will Learn

Cholesterol and Lipids

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



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

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

Things That Put You at Risk

that CAN'T be changed



Family history/Genetics



Race/ethnicity



Age



Sex

Let's Talk About Risk Factors



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

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

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.

Cholesterol Management



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

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.



Taking Care of Your Heart and Brain

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)



Four Health Behaviors You Can Do

Adequate Sleep

Getting 7-9 hours of
sleep per night



Healthy Diet

Adhering to a DASH or
Mediterranean diet



Physical Activity

150 minutes or more of
moderate or greater physical
activity per week



Not Smoking or Vaping

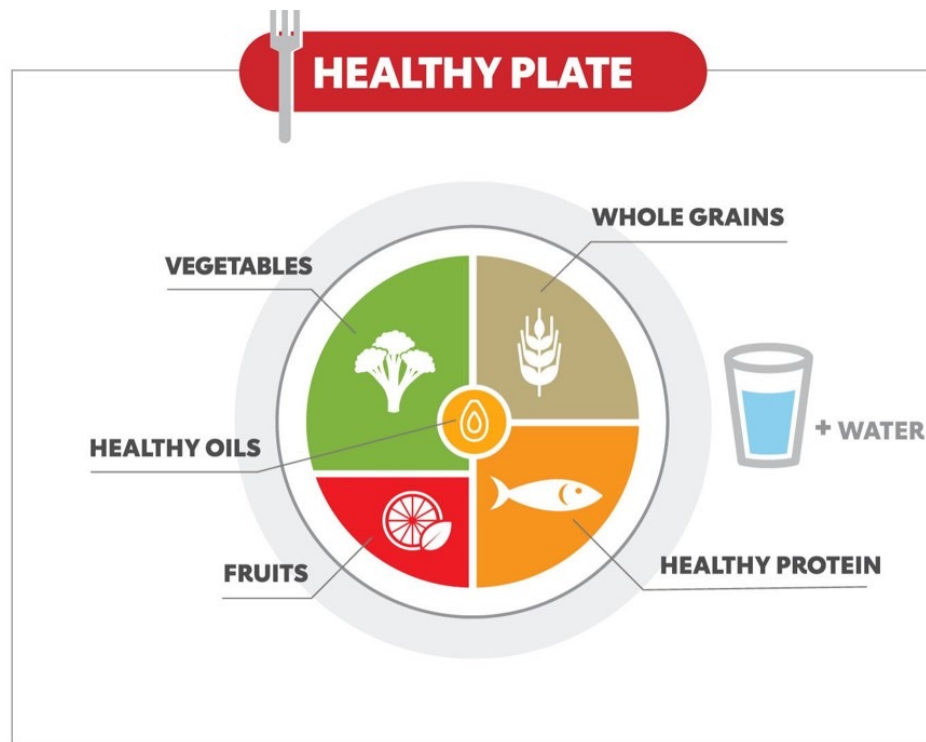


Let's Talk Food



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

Enjoying a Healthy Diet



BUILD A HEALTHY PLATE

- 1/2 veggies and fruits
- 1/4 whole grains such as brown rice
- 1/4 protein such as beans, skinless chicken or fish



REDUCE THE SALT YOU EAT

Let's Talk Exercise



What is moderate activity
or vigorous activity?

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.

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!

Let's Talk Sleep



How many hours of
sleep do you get?

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!

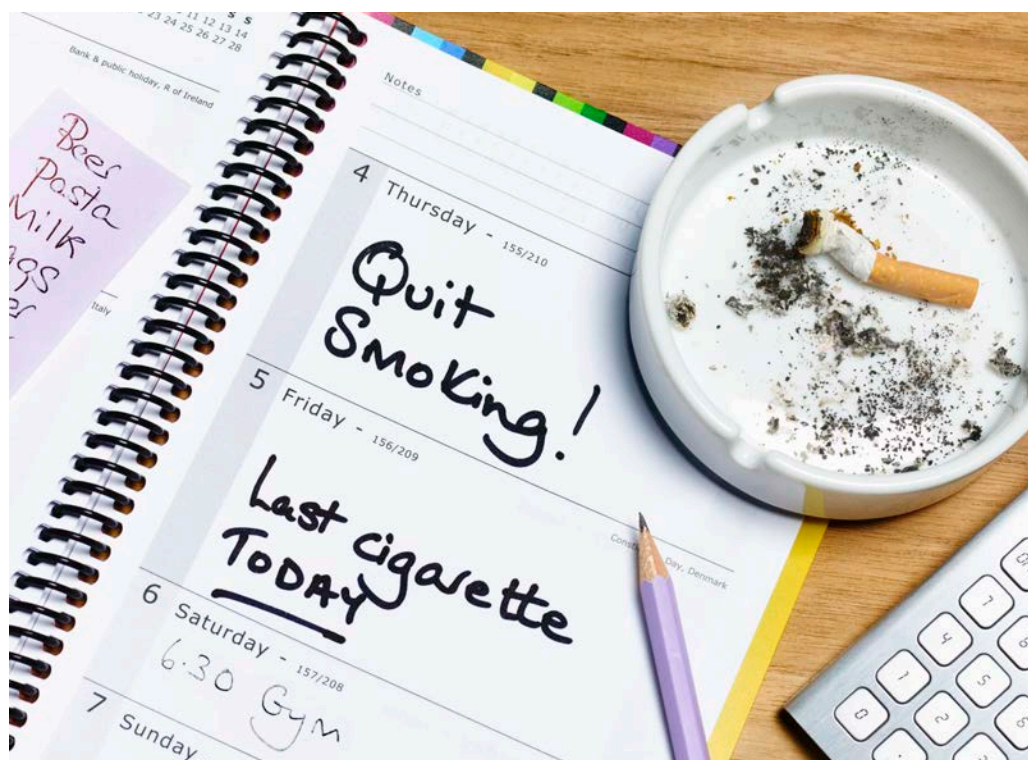
Let's Talk Tobacco & Nicotine



Which one of these is a risk if you smoke?

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

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.

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.

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.

Additional Resources



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

heart.org/Cholesterol

Stay In Touch



Follow us **@AmericanHeart** on social media and DM us to let us know how you're doing!

