High blood cholesterol is treated with lifestyle changes and medicines. The main goal of treatment is to lower your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol level enough to reduce your risk for coronary heart disease, heart attack, and other related health problems.

Talk with your doctor about lowering your cholesterol and your risk for heart disease.

Also, check the list to find out whether you have risk factors that affect your LDL cholesterol goal:

- Cigarette smoking
- High blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg or higher), or you’re on medicine to treat high blood pressure
- Low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL)
- Family history of early heart disease (heart disease in father or brother before age 55; heart disease in mother or sister before age 65)
- Age (men 45 years or older; women 55 years or older)

Your doctor will work with you to identify your risk of heart disease and may place you in a category to set your LDL goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>LDL Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. High risk*</td>
<td>Less than 100 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Moderately high risk</td>
<td>Less than 130 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Moderate risk</td>
<td>Less than 130 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Low to moderate risk</td>
<td>Less than 160 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some people in this category are at very high risk because they’ve just had a heart attack or they have diabetes and heart disease, or other risk factors. If you’re at very high risk, your doctor may set your LDL goal even lower, to less than 70 mg/dL. Your doctor also may set your LDL goal at this lower level if you have heart disease alone.
Lowering Cholesterol Using Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes

TLC is a set of lifestyle changes that can help you lower your LDL cholesterol. The main parts of the TLC program are a healthy diet, weight management, and physical activity.

The TLC Diet

With the TLC diet, less than 7 percent of your daily calories should come from saturated fat. This kind of fat is found in some meats, dairy products, chocolate, baked goods, and deep-fried and processed foods.

No more than 25 to 35 percent of your daily calories should come from all fats, including saturated, trans, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated fats.

You also should have less than 200 mg a day of cholesterol. The amounts of cholesterol and the types of fat in prepared foods can be found on the foods’ Nutrition Facts labels.

Foods high in soluble fiber also are part of the TLC diet. They help prevent the digestive tract from absorbing cholesterol. These foods include:

- Whole-grain cereals such as oatmeal and oat bran
- Fruits such as apples, bananas, oranges, pears, and prunes
- Legumes such as kidney beans, lentils, chick peas, black-eyed peas, and lima beans

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can increase important cholesterol-lowering compounds in your diet. These compounds, called plant stanols or sterols, work like soluble fiber.

A healthy diet also includes some types of fish, such as salmon, tuna (canned or fresh), and mackerel. These fish are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. These acids may help protect the heart from blood clots and inflammation, and reduce the risk of heart attack. Try to have about two fish meals every week.

You also should try to limit the amount of sodium (salt) that you eat. This means choosing low-salt and “no added salt” foods and seasonings at the table or while cooking. The Nutrition Facts label on food packaging shows the amount of sodium in the item.

Try to limit drinks with alcohol. Too much alcohol will raise your blood pressure and triglyceride level. (Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood.) Alcohol also adds extra calories, which will cause weight gain.

Men should have no more than two drinks containing alcohol a day. Women should have no more than one drink containing alcohol a day. One drink is a glass of wine, beer, or a small amount of hard liquor.

Weight Management

If you’re overweight or obese, losing weight can help lower LDL cholesterol.

Physical Activity

Routine physical activity can lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and raise your HDL cholesterol level.

People gain health benefits from as little as 60 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. The more active you are, the more you will benefit.
How does my doctor determine if I need medication?

Your doctor will consider many risk factors when prescribing a statin therapy, including if you fall into one of the 4 major groups in the new guidelines. These 4 groups were identified as patients who could benefit from statin therapy.

Guidelines for patients who can benefit from statin therapy include:

1. Individuals with clinical ASCVD.
2. Individuals with LDL–C over 190 mg/dL.
3. Individuals with diabetes aged 40 to 75 years with LDL–C from 70 to 189 mg/dL and without clinical ASCVD.
4. Individuals without clinical ASCVD or diabetes with LDL–C 70 to 189 mg/dL and estimated 10-year ASCVD risk >7.5%.

Arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) includes coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, and peripheral arterial disease.

Cholesterol-Lowering Medicines

In addition to lifestyle changes, your doctor may prescribe medicines to help lower your cholesterol. Even with medicines, you should continue the TLC program.

Medicines can help control high blood cholesterol, but they don’t cure it. Thus, you must continue taking your medicine to keep your cholesterol level in the recommended range.

The five major types of cholesterol-lowering medicines are statins, bile acid sequestrants (seh-KWES-trants), nicotinic (nick-o-TIN-ick) acid, fibrates, and ezetimibe.

- Statins work well at lowering LDL cholesterol. These medicines are safe for most people. Rare side effects include muscle and liver problems.
- Bile acid sequestrants also help lower LDL cholesterol. These medicines usually aren’t prescribed as the only medicine to lower cholesterol. Sometimes they’re prescribed with statins.
- Nicotinic acid lowers LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and raises HDL cholesterol. You should only use this type of medicine with a doctor’s supervision.
- Fibrates lower triglycerides, and they may raise HDL cholesterol. When used with statins, fibrates may increase the risk of muscle problems.
- Ezetimibe lowers LDL cholesterol. This medicine works by blocking the intestine from absorbing cholesterol.
While you’re being treated for high blood cholesterol, you’ll need ongoing care. Your doctor will want to make sure your cholesterol levels are controlled. He or she also will want to check for other health problems.

If needed, your doctor may prescribe medicines for other health problems. Take all medicines exactly as your doctor prescribes. The combination of medicines may lower your risk for heart disease and heart attack.

If you smoke, quit. Talk with your doctor about programs and products that can help you quit smoking. Also, try to avoid secondhand smoke. If you’re overweight or obese, try to lose weight. Your doctor can help you create a reasonable weight-loss plan.

**Talk to Your Doctor**

Always talk to your doctor about what is best for you. Ask your doctor before starting any treatments or making changes in your routine or medicine.