

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is normally dissolved in your blood. It is needed to help your body make important hormones. Cholesterol only becomes a problem when you have too much.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I HAVE TOO MUCH CHOLESTEROL?

If you have too much cholesterol in your blood, it can start to build up in the lining of your arteries.



Over time, your arteries can become narrowed and blocked and this can lead to a heart attack, stroke or problems getting blood through your lower legs.

Once any cholesterol has lined your arteries, you cannot remove it, but you can stop it from getting worse. This is why it is so important to look after your cholesterol and to work on lowering your levels if they are too high – don't wait!

Total Cholesterol		If your total cholesterol is higher than 5.2 then you need to reduce it. Don't wait until your cholesterol is very high – 50% of all heart attacks happen at a cholesterol level between 5.2 and 6.2!
LDL Cholesterol	Less than 3.0	This type of cholesterol is often called 'bad' cholesterol as it is the type that blocks arteries.
HDL Cholesterol	More than 1.5	HDL is called 'good' cholesterol as it helps to remove LDL cholesterol from your blood.
Triglycerides	Less than 1.8	This is another type of fat found in your blood and high levels are linked with an increased risk of heart disease.

HOW CAN I LOWER CHOLESTEROL?

When it comes to lowering cholesterol, the most important place to start is with what you eat. Cholesterol can be increased by eating too much saturated fat or too many foods rich in cholesterol. You can also eat foods that will actively help to lower your cholesterol.

If you do have high cholesterol it is worth getting some good advice on diet to make sure you cutting back on the right foods but not missing out on important nutrients.

Medication is also important in lowering cholesterol. Whilst diet will help most people, some people find it hard to follow healthy eating plans or they may have a very high level of cholesterol that needs to be reduced quickly. Genetics may also be important. Your doctor will discuss the right medication with you.

WHAT IF I WANT TO AVOID MEDICATION?

If you want to try diet alone to reduce cholesterol, you need to give it 3-6 months. Although cholesterol will come down within a few weeks with a healthy diet, you need to be sure that you can keep going with the diet long-term.

That is why we look at 3-6 months on a cholesterol lowering diet before thinking again about whether or not you need medication. If your cholesterol is not at healthy levels after 6 months of diet, you may need medication. If you have been trying to diet yourself, it may be worth having a consultation with a qualified dietitian to see if there is anything else you can do before you start medication.

If you would like to make an appointment for a low Cholesterol diet you can contact the **Albany Clinic** on **01 6612222**. If you have any questions you can contact **Sarah Keogh** at info@eatwell.ie.

