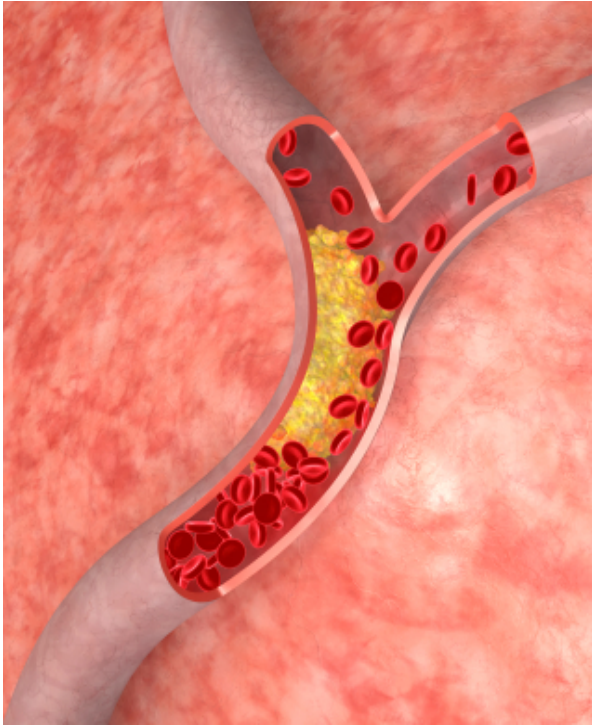


# High Cholesterol

## What is it?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is found in the fats (lipids) in your blood that your body needs, but having high cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease. When you have high cholesterol, you may develop fatty deposits in your blood vessels.

Eventually, these deposits make it difficult for blood to flow through your arteries. See the illustration below. Your heart may not get as much oxygen-rich blood as it needs, which increases the risk of a heart attack. Decreased blood flow to your brain can cause a stroke.



## What are the symptoms?

High cholesterol has no symptoms. A blood test is the only way to detect high cholesterol. Knowing your cholesterol and monitoring it regularly is important for managing your health.

## Causes

Cholesterol is carried through your blood, attached to proteins. This combination of proteins and cholesterol is called a lipoprotein. You may have heard of different types of cholesterol, based on what type of cholesterol the lipoprotein carries. They are:

- Low-density lipoprotein (LDL).
- Very-low-density lipoprotein (VLDL).
- High-density lipoprotein (HDL).



## Risk Factors

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Smoking             | Family History           |
| High blood pressure | Age over 45 for men      |
| Low HDL Cholesterol | Age over 55 for women    |
| Diabetes            | Elevated lipoprotein (A) |

## Test and Diagnosis

A blood test to check cholesterol levels — called a lipid panel or lipid profile — typically reports:

- Total cholesterol
- LDL cholesterol
- HDL cholesterol
- Triglycerides — a type of fat in the blood

## Complications

High cholesterol can cause atherosclerosis, a dangerous accumulation of cholesterol and other deposits on the walls of your arteries. These deposits -called plaques - can reduce blood flow through your arteries, which can cause complications, such as:

- Chest pain
- Heart attack
- Stroke

## How to treat it?

Lifestyle changes such as exercising and eating a healthy diet are the first line of defense against high cholesterol but you might also have to take some medication.

## Can it be prevented?

The same heart-healthy lifestyle changes that can lower your cholesterol can help prevent you from having high cholesterol. Regular physical exercise and maintaining a diet low in saturated fat are two preventive measures to avoid high cholesterol.

More health information is available at [bewellstaywell.az.gov](http://bewellstaywell.az.gov).