

What treatments can lower a cholesterol level?

If you do not have an atheroma related disease (such as heart attack)

- Your doctor or nurse may suggest a 3 month trial of healthy eating (and weight loss where relevant), and then re-check your cholesterol level.
- You should aim to reduce any other 'risk factors' too. For example smoking and a lack of exercise.
- Medication to reduce your cholesterol level may be advised if your cholesterol level remains too high after 3 months. A 'statin' medicine is usually used to lower cholesterol. There are several brands of 'statin'. They work by blocking an enzyme (chemical) which is needed to make cholesterol in the liver.

If you already have an atheroma related disease (such as angina etc).

- A statin medicine is usually advised straight away to reduce the cholesterol level.

Further information can be found at the British Heart Foundation Website.

www.bhf.org.uk

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The Pentlands Medical Centre

Patient information Leaflet



Cholesterol

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Should I have my cholesterol level checked?

In certain situations it is useful to know your cholesterol level to get a better idea of your health risk, and if necessary, to plan treatment to reduce your health risk. So, a cholesterol blood test is commonly advised if:

- you have other significant risk factors, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. A high blood cholesterol would add to your existing risk.
- you already have angina, had a heart attack, had a stroke or TIA, have peripheral vascular disease or have another atheroma related condition.
- a very high cholesterol level runs in the family (family hypercholesterolaemia)

The blood test is not usually advised if you are healthy, and your other risk factors are low.

What is a 'high' cholesterol level?

As a rule the higher the cholesterol level, the greater the risk to health. As a guide, a level less than 5 mmol/l is considered 'good', and is often the target advised to aim for. However, at least half of adults in the UK have a cholesterol level above 5mmol/l. An acceptable cholesterol level depends on whether you have other risk factors. For example:

- if you have a raised cholesterol, and you smoke, and you have a family history of early heart disease, then you have quite an increased risk of developing heart disease in the future.
- but, the increased health risk is small if you have no other risk factors apart from a raised cholesterol.

A 'risk factor calculator' is used by doctors and nurses to predict the health risk for an individual. The calculated score takes into account all your risk factors. Current guidelines advise that you should lower your cholesterol level if your score gives you a 3 in ten risk (or more) of developing heart disease within the next ten years, and your cholesterol level is higher than 5.0 mmol/l.

If you already have an atheroma related disease (angina etc)

Up until recently, guidelines advised that your cholesterol level should be lowered if it is higher than 5.0 mmol/l. However, recent evidence suggests that the risk of further problems are reduced if the cholesterol level is reduced, whatever the level. Even if it already below 5.0 mmol/l. So you may be advised to take cholesterol lowering treatment irrespective of your cholesterol level if you have angina; have had a heart attack; have had a stroke or a TIA; have peripheral vascular disease; have another atheroma related condition.

What can I do to lower my cholesterol level?

Loose weight if you are overweight or obese. Even a modest amount of weight loss will help.

Eating a healthy diet can help to bring cholesterol down. A practice nurse or dietician may advise you on how to eat healthy.

