

Health care tips

Tips for people with diabetes and high cholesterol

What is high cholesterol?¹

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatty substance in your body. There are two main types of cholesterol:

1. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is the “bad” cholesterol. When you have high cholesterol, you have too much LDL cholesterol in your blood. It can stick to the walls of your blood vessels and clog them. Over time, this can slow the flow of blood to your heart and brain. High LDL cholesterol levels can lead to serious conditions, like heart disease and stroke.
2. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is the “good” cholesterol. It picks up and removes bad cholesterol from your blood vessels. High levels of HDL can lower your risk of stroke or heart attack.

Your cholesterol is affected by your blood sugar and blood pressure. If your blood sugar and blood pressure are high, your cholesterol may be off as well.

An important first step: Talk to your doctor.

Talk to your doctor about checking your cholesterol at least once a year if you have diabetes or heart disease. This will help your doctor decide if you should take cholesterol-lowering medication.

Medications can help lower high cholesterol.²

Statins are one of the most commonly used medications to treat high cholesterol. They work by blocking cholesterol production in your body. Statins may lower your risk of stroke and heart problems. People with diabetes and high cholesterol are advised to use statin medications. Lowering your cholesterol will help lower your risk of heart disease or heart attack.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Should I take medication for my high cholesterol? If so, which medication is right for me?
- What is my cholesterol goal?
- What do I need to know about my statin medication?
- How can I take care of my diabetes?

Ways to keep your diabetes and cholesterol in check:³

- Cut down on foods that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. Choose foods that are high in fiber, such as oatmeal and split peas.
- Eat foods with omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish, or take supplements to protect your heart and lower your risk of heart attack.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Increase your physical activity. But first, talk to your doctor.
- Stop smoking.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute | nhlbi.nih.gov

American College of Cardiology | cardiosmart.org/Heart-Conditions/Guidelines/Cholesterol

American Heart Association | heart.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | cdc.gov

¹ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website. High Blood Cholesterol. nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc/. Accessed November 10, 2017.

² Stone, NJ, Robinson J, Lichtenstein AH, et al. 2013 ACC/AHA Guideline on the Treatment of Blood Cholesterol to Reduce Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Risk in Adults: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2013;doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2013.11.002.

³ American Diabetes Association. Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes—2015. *Diabetes Care.* 2015;38 (Suppl 1):S4-S85.

The information in this educational tool does not substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis or treatment of your physician. Always seek the help of your physician or qualified health provider for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition.