



American Heart Association®

EmPOWERED to Serve™

# Control Your Cholesterol

#EmPOWERChange

# CHOLESTEROL HEALTH LESSON | Lesson Overview

## Welcome

- What is EmPOWERED to Serve?
- Background Information and Urgent Community Need
- Program Objectives

## Health Lesson

- What is Cholesterol?
- How Cholesterol Affects Your Heart Health
- What You Can Do to Manage Your Cholesterol

## Closing Thoughts

- Wrap-Up/Calls to Action
- Online Resources



# WHAT IS EMPOWERED TO SERVE?

**EmPOWERED to Serve is a movement inspiring those who are passionate about driving change through health justice in their communities.**

We are catalysts for change,  
empowering the equity equation.

**AHA's Mission Statement:**  
**To be a relentless force for a  
world of longer, healthier lives.**



American Heart Association.  
**EmPOWERED to Serve™**

# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- Social determinants of health are conditions in which we're born and live. They provide context to our lives and can affect health as much as medications and lifestyle changes.
- Food insecurity can play a major role in achieving and maintaining healthy cholesterol levels due to the lack of access to foods necessary for a heart-healthy diet.
- Environmental factors can also affect your ability to engage in or access to physical activity. People who feel unsafe where they live may be more likely to stay home and exercise less.





# LIFE'S ESSENTIAL 8™

The American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 are key behaviors and health factors to improve and maintain ideal cardiovascular health.

- Eat healthy.
- Be active.
- Quit tobacco (including cigarettes and vaping) and secondhand smoke.
- Get healthy sleep.
- Manage weight.
- Control cholesterol.
- Manage blood sugar.
- Manage blood pressure.



# COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Social determinants of health have a profound effect on health.
- People who are under-resourced face bias and discrimination that can affect their risk factors for hypercholesterolemia.
- Community support can encourage others to advocate for their own health through education and awareness.



# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

After today's lesson, you'll be able to share with your family and friends:

- The role of cholesterol in the body
- The difference between "good" and "bad" cholesterol
- How to make small changes to manage cholesterol





# WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?: How It Works

- Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that comes from two sources.
  - Body: Your liver makes the cholesterol your body needs.
  - Food: Cholesterol comes from the food you eat from animals.
- It travels in your body by lipoproteins: low-density cholesterol (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).
- Cholesterol is an important component in a healthy body, but having too much LDL or “bad” cholesterol can cause various health problems.





# WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?: The “Bad” Kind

- LDL is “bad” cholesterol. It’s the type of cholesterol you want to keep lower, remember **lower LDL**.
- LDL cholesterol builds up in the walls of the arteries along with fats and other substances, creating **plaque**.
- Plaque reduces blood flow due to the narrowing of the passage and can increase the risk for heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease.

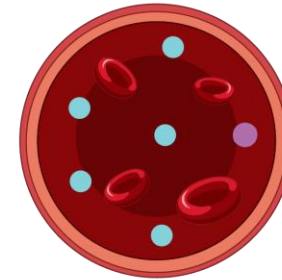


“good”  
cholesterol

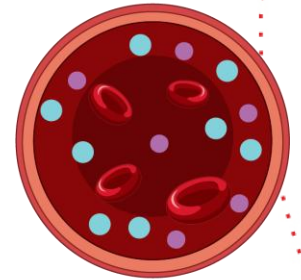


“bad”  
cholesterol

## Normal Artery

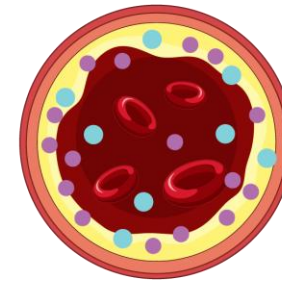


low

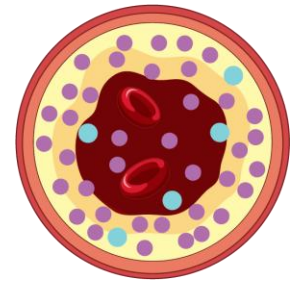


normal

## Artery Narrowed



moderate



high



# WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?: The “Good” Kind

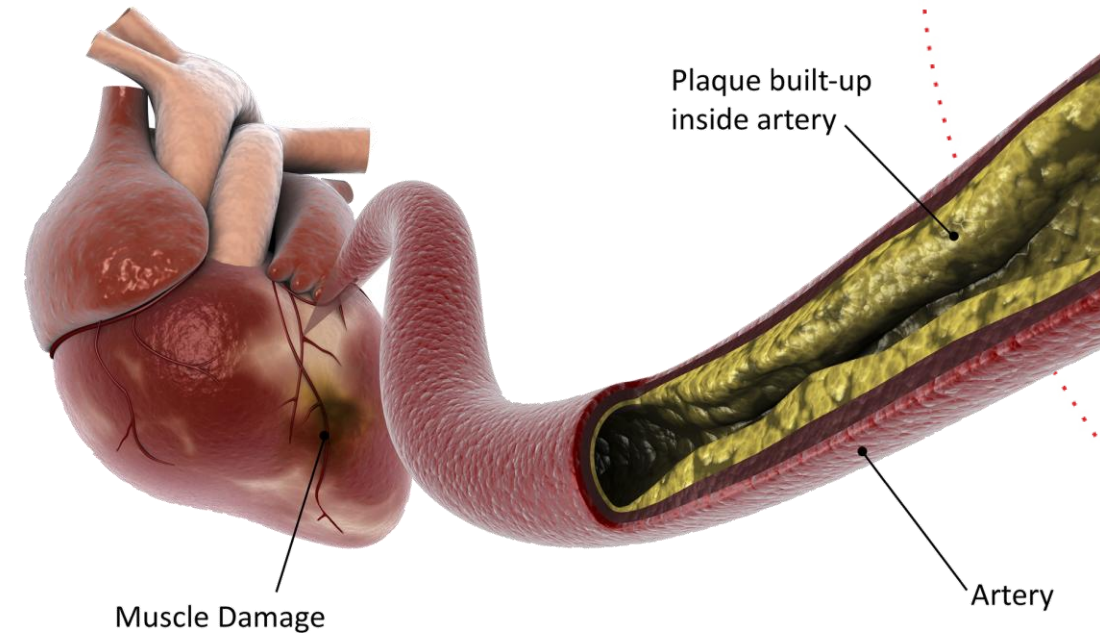
- HDL is the “good” kind of cholesterol. It’s the type of cholesterol you want to keep higher, remember **h**igher **H**DL.
- HDL cholesterol removes LDL cholesterol and cycles it through the arteries to the liver, where it can be expelled from the body.
- It can remove cholesterol from plaque buildup in the walls of your arteries and help reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.



# HOW CHOLESTEROL AFFECTS YOUR HEART HEALTH:

## Plaque Buildup

- Plaque buildup can put you at risk for blood clots, heart attack and stroke.
- Triglycerides, the most common type of fat in the body, store excess energy from your diet and can contribute to the plaque in your artery walls.
- Having high levels of triglycerides, paired with unbalanced levels of LDL and HDL cholesterol, can increase your risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke.





# HOW CHOLESTEROL AFFECTS YOUR HEART HEALTH:

## Who Is at Risk?

It has long been believed that only people of a certain age, weight or gender are affected by cholesterol problems. But this is not the case.

- The American Heart Association recommends that all adults aged 20 or older, especially those with a family history, have their cholesterol and other risk factors checked, followed by check-ups every four to six years if their risk is low. After age 40, your health care professional may use an equation to calculate your 10-year risk of having a heart attack or stroke.





# HOW CHOLESTEROL AFFECTS YOUR HEART HEALTH:

## Who Is at Risk?

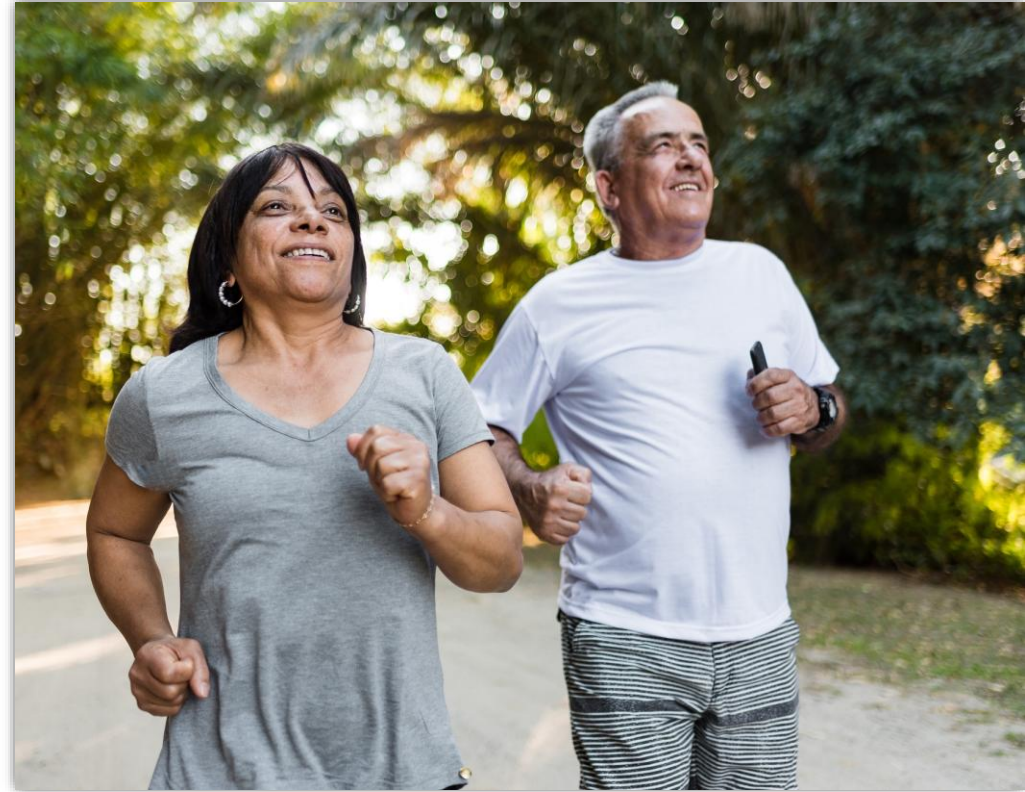
- To help minimize the risk for high “bad” cholesterol, maintain a healthy diet and weight, cut out the use of all tobacco, and stay physically active.
- Men are typically at risk for atherosclerosis sooner in life, but cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women.
- Women-specific conditions factor into high cholesterol, such as premature menopause and pregnancy-related conditions.



# HOW CHOLESTEROL AFFECTS YOUR HEART HEALTH:

## Genetic and Cardiovascular Risk

- Your genetics can affect your risk of high LDL cholesterol. Familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) is a genetic condition in which people have high LDL cholesterol levels in their blood.
- Age also affects cholesterol. People born with FH naturally have high cholesterol that may worsen over time.
- Though a healthy diet and exercise can lower LDL cholesterol levels, people with FH may require medication to balance them.
- If your family has a history of heart disease or high cholesterol at an early age, consider talking to your health care professional about FH.



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE YOUR CHOLESTEROL:

## Assessing Your Cholesterol Levels

- Your health care professional can check your cholesterol levels with a blood test.
  - The test (lipid profile) assesses several types of fat in the blood, giving you four results: total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Cholesterol levels can affect your risk for adverse events regarding your heart health. With your numbers in hand, use our [Check. Change. Control. Calculator™](#) to learn your risk for a heart attack or stroke.





# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE YOUR CHOLESTEROL:

## Talking to Your Health Care Professional

- Living with high LDL cholesterol can be manageable with help from your health care professional. Understanding your risk for heart disease is vital in deciding on a treatment plan.
- Here are some questions you can ask your health care professional at your next appointment:
  - What do my cholesterol levels mean?
  - What else contributes to my risk of heart attack or stroke?
  - What lifestyle changes can I make to lower my risk for heart disease and stroke?
  - Should I consider medication to lower my risk?





# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE YOUR CHOLESTEROL:

## Prescribed Medications

- It's common to be prescribed medication to help to lower cholesterol. The most commonly prescribed medications are called **statins**.
- Statins help lower LDL cholesterol.
- Different kinds of statins can interrupt the production of cholesterol and reduce the body's reaction to elevated cholesterol levels within blood vessel walls, which helps reduce plaque buildup.
- Other forms of medication or combinations may be prescribed depending on what's best for you. Talking to your health care professional and monitoring side effects will help you find the best treatment plan for your needs.



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE YOUR CHOLESTEROL:

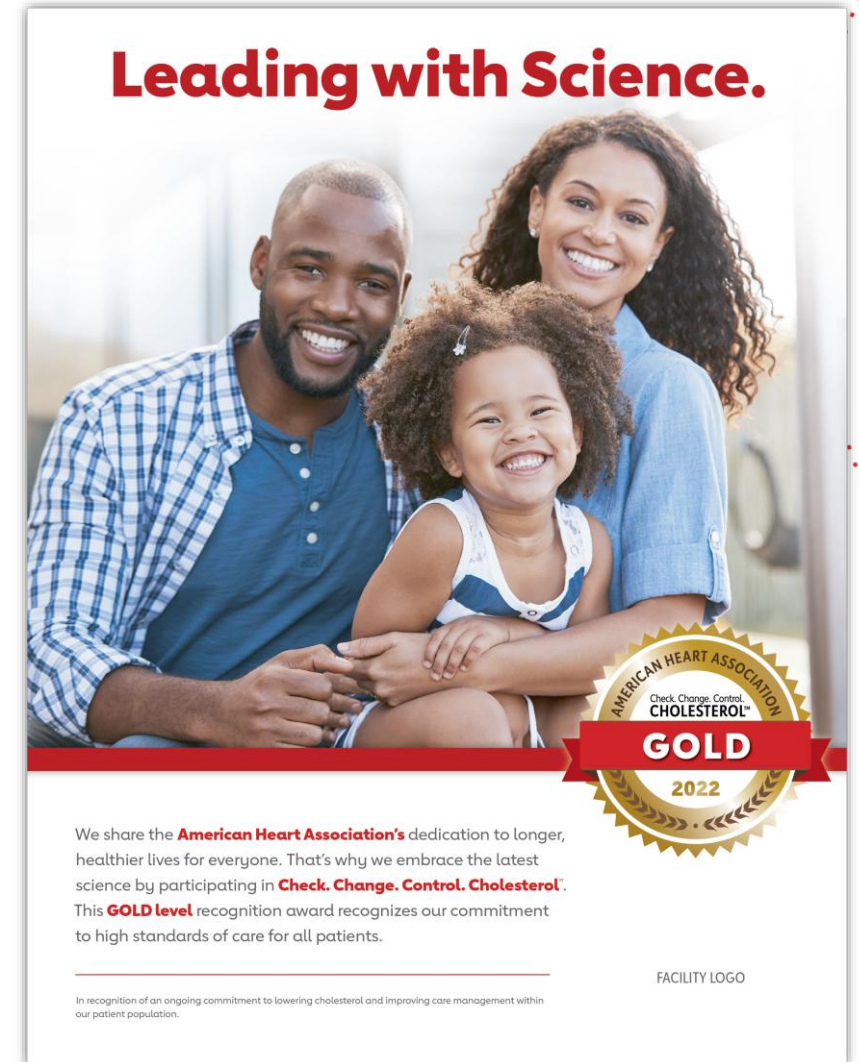
## Your Heart-Healthy Treatment Plan

- You can make small changes now to reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke and help manage your cholesterol levels. This includes:
  - Understanding cholesterol levels.
  - Knowing your risk for heart disease and stroke based on your health history.
  - Not using tobacco products.
  - Eating a heart-healthy diet.
  - Getting enough physical activity.
  - Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight.
  - Discussing your ideal LDL with your health care professional.
- For support, you can encourage your family and friends to join you in your heart-healthy lifestyle.



# CALL TO ACTION

- Checking, changing (if needed) and controlling your cholesterol levels is an important part of maintaining a healthy heart and reducing your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Making small lifestyle changes can help reduce cholesterol-related diseases such as hypercholesterolemia and atherosclerosis.
- Asking your doctor what other actions should be taken to control your cholesterol.





# YOUR VOICE MATTERS

We all have the power to make a difference by speaking out for policies that help build healthier communities and healthier lives.

Join **You're the Cure** today and be among the first to know when major policy initiatives pass or when your help is needed to advocate for a healthy future.

Text **EMPOWER** to **46839** to join today!





# USE YOUR VOICE TO CREATE HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

You can help us work to draw communities together on the path to building a sustainable culture of health.

Go to [EmPOWEREDtoServe.org](https://EmPOWEREDtoServe.org)

Sign up to become an ambassador and learn how you can be a part of the movement!

**Join us as we impact the health  
of ALL in our communities!**



# WRAP-UP

**We appreciate your thoughts!**

Tell us what you liked best.

Email us at:  
[empoweredtoserve@heart.org](mailto:empoweredtoserve@heart.org)





# WE ARE **EMPOWERED TO SERVE**

...serve our health, serve our community



**The American Heart Association requests that this document be cited as follows:**  
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