



What You Need To Know About Cholesterol

By Agata Williams

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We can modify the Goldilocks' Rule, and apply it to so many things in nutrition! Cholesterol is no exception: we want to have “just right” amounts of cholesterol in our body - not too little, not too much.

Cholesterol is incredibly important. It is a waxy substance in your blood, and your body uses it for many important things, such as making hormones. But too much of this waxy substance in your blood, and you are running a risk of a heart disease, as it may build up and clog your blood vessels.

There are four numbers that you will receive when you get your cholesterol checked:

1. **Total Cholesterol** - It measures it all; think about it like an umbrella under which are LDLs, HDLs and Triglycerides. Ideally this number should be 200 or less.
2. **LDL** - “Bad” cholesterol, or to make it easier to remember, think “**L**ousy cholesterol”. This is the type of cholesterol that can block your arteries - so **L**ower are better: ideally, this number should be below 100.
3. **HDL** - “Good” cholesterol, or to make it easier to remember, think “**H**ealthy cholesterol” - this is the type of cholesterol that cleans up LDL's in your arteries. **H**igher levels are better: Ideally this number should be above 40 for men and 50 for women.
4. Finally, **Triglycerides**, sometimes just called “Trigs” are yet another type of fat in your blood, and if there is too much of it, it can be dangerous. Ideally, this number should be below 150.

There are some things that impact your cholesterol levels, that you cannot change:

- Family history and genetics - If people in your family have elevated cholesterol, you are at higher risk of experiencing the same.
- Age - As we get older body may have more difficulties clearing cholesterol out.
- Sex - Women, especially women after menopause, tend to have elevated cholesterol levels.

But there are also things that impact your cholesterol levels, that you **can** change:

- Work on weight loss if you are overweight or obese.
- Start moving if you have a sedentary lifestyle - Start slowly but be consistent.
- Quit smoking if you smoke.
- Reduce alcohol to none or minimum.
- Eat healthy balanced diet with plenty of whole vegetables, fruits, complex carbohydrates to make sure you have enough fiber in your diet.
- Reduce “solid” fats like butter, lard, poultry skin, fatty edges on meats, margarine, and shortening.
- Increase “liquid” fats like olive oil, avocado oil, etc.
- Reduce fried fast foods, pastries and commercially baked goods as many of them contain trans-fats.
- Increase intake of fish (especially salmon and mackerel), nuts and nut butters, avocados and olives.

If you have more questions about how to reduce your cholesterol levels, schedule an appointment with Agata Williams, RDN your primary care provider. Please call our office at (410) 989-8833, email register@inspire-im.com or [schedule online](#).