

# Managing Your Cholesterol



Heart disease is very common among people with type 2 diabetes. Coronary artery disease is the most common form of heart disease. It develops when the arteries that supply the heart or brain with blood become narrowed or blocked by fatty deposits, potentially causing heart attack or stroke. In fact, up to 80 per cent of people with diabetes will die as a result of a heart attack or stroke.

People with diabetes often have a number of risk factors for heart disease, including the following:

- High blood glucose
- Being overweight (especially in the abdomen)
- Inactive lifestyles
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol

People who smoke or have a family history of heart disease or stroke are at even higher risk.

Talk to your family health care provider and health care team about ways to improve your cholesterol and lower your risk!

## Have you had your cholesterol tested lately?

People with diabetes have an increased risk of heart attack and stroke even if their LDL-cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol) is “normal”. They have an even higher risk if their LDL-cholesterol is above normal.

If you have diabetes, you should have your cholesterol tested every one to three years: more frequently if you are taking cholesterol-lowering medications.

Talk to your family health care provider and other members of your health care team about how to keep your LDL-cholesterol within your target range. Most adults with diabetes need medications (such as a statin) in addition to weight management, healthy eating and regular physical activity.

## All about cholesterol: definitions

**Cholesterol:** a fat substance that is naturally present in your blood and cells. There are two main types of cholesterol: LDL and HDL.

- LDL (low-density lipoprotein): often called “bad” cholesterol because higher levels of LDL can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- HDL (high-density lipoprotein): often called “good” cholesterol because higher levels of HDL can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

**Total cholesterol to HDL ratio:** a measure of cardiovascular risk calculated by dividing your total cholesterol level by your HDL-cholesterol level.

**Triglyceride:** a form of fat that the body makes from sugar, alcohol or other food sources.

**Cardiovascular disease:** damage to the heart and blood vessels. One cause of this disease is narrowing of the blood vessels due to fat deposits on the vessel walls, which limits blood flow.

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For more information about cholesterol and diabetes, watch the video “Blood Pressure and Cholesterol!” in this kit.



This document reflects our  
**CPG**  
Clinical Practice Guidelines

Content taken from the Canadian Diabetes Association's consumer fact sheet, *Cholesterol and Diabetes*.

Are you doing all that you can to lower your LDL cholesterol?	Yes	No
I am taking my cholesterol medication(s) as prescribed by my family health care provider		
My weight is in the healthy range		
My waist measurement is in the healthy range		
I choose low-fat foods and avoid saturated and trans fat		
I limit cholesterol-containing foods		
I make high-fibre choices (such as whole grains)		
I eat enough vegetable and fruit servings every day		
I am physically active on a regular basis		

## Have you met your LDL target goal? Are you ready to do more for your cardiovascular health?

Your next step: lower your total cholesterol to HDL ratio and triglyceride level. The recommended total cholesterol to HDL ratio goal is less than 4.0. Ask your family health care provider for your ratio.

One way to lower your ratio is to raise your HDL. You may increase your HDL by choosing small amounts of the following unsaturated fat sources instead of saturated and trans fats:

- Vegetable oils: canola, olive, peanut
- Olives, avocados
- Soft non-hydrogenated margarine
- Nuts and seeds such as peanuts, almonds, ground flax

If your triglyceride level is very high, your family health care provider may suggest you lower it by taking medication and making healthier lifestyle choices. The following can help improve your triglyceride level:

- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink
- Achieve and maintain excellent blood glucose control
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Limit added sugar and low-fibre foods such as regular pop, candy, sugar-sweetened cereals