



Heart Health Guide

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEART HEALTH

COMFORT · FAIRNESS · VALUE

Cholesterol. What is it?

There is good cholesterol and bad cholesterol. Overall, your cholesterol levels will show your state of health in various ways and how your heart might be affected.



According to cardiologist Dr. Brian Khoo of Farrer Park Hospital, "There are two main types of cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or 'bad' cholesterol, and high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or 'good' cholesterol."

What gives LDL its bad name lies in what it does. It accumulates on the walls of the arteries, making them narrower. The fatty deposits form plaques that line your arteries, reducing blood supply to vital organs.

In the case of high cholesterol, Dr. Khoo explains that this "causes inflammation and the release of certain hormones that make blood vessels tighten or 'constrict,' causing the arteries to become stiff and narrow. The heart then has to pump extra hard to maintain good blood flow to other body parts, resulting in higher blood pressure."

Source: <https://www.myheart.org.sg/heart-news/connection-between-high-cholesterol-and-high-blood-pressure/>

Measuring BMI

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measurement of your height and weight to gain an indication of your body size.

According to New Zealand's Heart Foundation, this index should be considered together with other factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and your personal and family health history for checking your risk of heart disease.

The BMI should also be factored along with your age, gender, and body composition.

In addition, there are things we can do to aid our heart health along with considering the impact of our weight.

A few suggestions include:

- ▼ Choosing mostly heart-healthy foods
- ▼ Building movement into your day
- ▼ Not smoking
- ▼ Drinking less alcohol
- ▼ Managing stress
- ▼ Getting enough sleep

Source: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.nz/wellbeing/body-size-and-heart-health/bmi-calculator>

Food for the Heart

As a lifestyle choice, what you eat can affect your overall health and impact your heart. Consuming certain foods can possibly help the heart stay healthy and improve your health.

"Your heart is one of the most important organs in your body, and you are never too young or old to start caring for it.



Start by being mindful of what you eat. You can lower your risk of heart disease and its associated risk factors such as excess weight, hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes by eating a healthy balanced diet that incorporates a variety of nutrient-rich foods.

"Heart-smart eating is all about balance, portion control and variety."

This is the advice given by the Singapore Heart Foundation.

Source: <https://www.myheart.org.sg/healthy-living/heart-smart-eating-habits/>

Exercise for the Heart

Exercise in general has many benefits in terms of cardiovascular health, improving strength, and even increasing balance and coordination.

For the heart, studies have shown that a moderate level of exercise that is suitable for you can provide long-term benefits. In a feature by The New York Times on heart health, exercise is said to be beneficial as shown in research. In particular,

- ▼ It enhances the cardiorespiratory system
- ▼ It increases HDL cholesterol
- ▼ It lowers triglycerides, a type of fat that circulates in the blood

- ▼ It reduces blood pressure and heart rate
- ▼ It lowers inflammation and improves blood sugar control
- ▼ It increases insulin sensitivity

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/how-to-prevent-heart-disease>

Screening for the Heart

There are risk factors that can be assessed through early screening. With early detection and follow-up, treatment and prevention can be advised.



According to the Health Promotion Board (HPB), "Every adult aged 18 years and above should go for screening of cardiovascular risk factors. Individuals with diabetes, high blood pressure and long-standing kidney disease have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease and should be screened regularly based on their doctor's advice."

"Global cardiovascular risk assessment involves assessing a patient's total cardiovascular risk rather than just assessing risk factors (high cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes or obesity) in isolation," adds HPB.

Source: https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/16/screening_heart_disease