

Cholesterol

Having high blood cholesterol can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease and stroke. We should all have our blood cholesterol tested regularly, especially if we have a family history of high cholesterol.

What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a kind of fat, but not like the fat around your waist. It is actually made by your body, and is important for making hormones and maintaining the structure of every cell in your body.

Your body can make all of the cholesterol it needs. So, if you eat foods that contain lots of cholesterol you can develop **high cholesterol** in your blood.

Dangers of High Cholesterol

When there is too much cholesterol in your blood, it builds up in the walls of your arteries, and that can slow down or block the flow of blood. When this happens you have a greater chance of developing high blood pressure and heart disease or of having heart attacks or strokes. Since there are no symptoms of high blood cholesterol, your doctor should test your cholesterol level on a regular basis.

What Treatments Are Available?

Lifestyle Changes

Changing your eating habits and level of exercise can help lower your cholesterol. Losing as little as five pounds, limiting fatty foods (especially saturated fats), and walking or doing some other activity for 30 minutes, at least 3 times a week, will each help. Doing all three of these will help more.

Drug Treatment

There are some drug treatments to help you lower cholesterol. Your doctor will recommend what is best for you. Even if you begin a drug treatment, it is still important to continue making lifestyle changes. These changes help keep the dose of medicine as low as possible and improve your health in other ways as well.

What If I Am 75 Or Older?

Diminishing Benefits

We have little complete scientific proof that drugs work in older people because only a small number of research studies have included older adults, especially those over 85. For this reason, doctors don't agree about the benefit of treatments if you are over 75.

(Adapted with permission from the Practicing Physician Education Project 2006)

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What If I Am 75 Or Older? (Continued)

What they do agree on is that:

- Lowering cholesterol continues to prevent heart attacks and strokes, regardless of the age.
- Your chances of having a heart attack from other causes (not corrected by lowering cholesterol) increases after you are 75. Treatment still prevents heart attacks, but the number not prevented goes up as you get older.

For example, a thousand 55-year-old men with high cholesterol could expect 15 heart attacks in a year, and medicine to lower cholesterol might prevent five. The risk, therefore, is reduced by a third. However, a thousand 75-year-old people could expect 30 heart attacks in a year. Cholesterol medicine might prevent five (same as in the 55 year old group), but 25 still occur, and only one heart attack in six is prevented.

How Do I Make A Decision?

Making Your Decision

Your risks from high cholesterol and your personal views on drug treatment play a big role in your decision to use drugs if you are over 75. Practical concerns about the number of medicines you take and costs may make the difference in the best choice for you.

Read as much information as you can about cholesterol and its treatments. Then think about how you feel about taking another medicine with its risks and costs before you talk to your doctor about your cholesterol.

Resources Organizations

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

Web site: www.heartandstroke.on.ca

Belleville Office: Supporting Prince Edward, Hastings, Marmora, Quinte East, Trenton, Tweed, Madoc, Bancroft & Marmora Lake

121 Dundas Street East, Suite 106A

Belleville, Ontario K8N 1C3

Telephone (613) 962-2502

Fax (613) 962-6080

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Resources **Brockville Office: Supporting Perth & Lanark Area, Gananoque, Leeds West, Kemptville-Grenville North, Smiths Falls**
(Continued)

51 King Street East, Suite 310
Brockville, Ontario K6V 1A8
Telephone (613) 345-6183
Fax (613) 345-3037

Cornwall Office: Supporting Stormont, Prescott-Russell, Dundas & Glengarry

36 Second Street East
Cornwall, Ontario K6H 1Y3
Telephone (613) 938-8933
Fax (613) 938-0655

Kingston Office: Supporting Frontenac, Lennox-Addington

720 Progress Avenue
Kingston, Ontario K7M 4W9
Telephone (613) 384-2871
Fax (613) 384-2899

Other Resources **Web Sites**
Canadian Cardiovascular Society

Web site: www.ccs.ca

Health Check

Web site: www.healthcheck.org/

Smart Choices, Made Simple.

The Health Check™ program has been designed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada to help you with your grocery shopping for wise food choices. To learn more about the Health Check™ program, visit the site.

Heart and Stroke Research

www.hsf.ca/research

This site is intended primarily for individuals with an interest in the research

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Other Resources (Continued) programs of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. A more comprehensive site with information relevant for other groups, in particular the general public, is available at www.heartandstroke.ca. Please take time to visit this site.

Medbroadcast

Web site: www.medbroadcast.com

Medbroadcast is a partner of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and one of Canada's leading providers of patient-focused health and wellness information on the web.

Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion

Web site: www.mhp.gov.on.ca

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario works in partnership with the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) to encourage Ontarians to lead healthier lives. With tobacco being the No. 1 preventable cause of heart disease and stroke, the Ministry's Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, one of the most comprehensive in North America, is a key focus of this work. Another key partnership with the Ministry is the Ontario Stroke System, which aims to provide people with the best possible stroke care across the continuum of care, including prevention, emergency and acute, rehabilitation, community and research.

The Canadian Stroke Strategy

Web site: www.canadianstrokestrategy.ca

The Canadian Stroke Strategy is a joint initiative of the Canadian Stroke Network and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. The goal of the Canadian Stroke Strategy is to help support an integrated approach to stroke prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in every province and territory by 2010.

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