

How to Improve LDL Levels

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According to the American Heart Association statistics, an estimated 98.6 million Americans have cholesterol levels over 200 mg/dl, the diagnostic threshold for hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol actually represents several components: total cholesterol, low density lipoproteins (LDL) and high density lipoproteins (HDL). LDL is the precursor to heart disease and can be reduced through diet, [exercise](#) and medications.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

things you'll need:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fresh fish or supplements
- Exercise clothing and shoes
- Medications (optional)

- 1 Make an appointment with your physician to have a complete physical examination, including a blood lipid profile test. If there is any history of heart disease in your [family](#), he may also want to include a resting electrocardiogram. Tell him you are concerned about your cholesterol levels.
- 2 Review the results of your physical examination with your physician, especially your blood chemistry results. If your LDL levels are high but the other levels are with normal ranges, she may recommend that you begin working with a registered dietitian to lower your LDL levels without affecting your HDL levels. The typical approach is through diet and exercise for at least six months before having your blood re-tested.
- 3 Record all of the food you currently eat in a dietary journal and share the results with your dietitian. Include everything you eat, including snacks. After a week, go over the results with your dietitian and begin looking at ways to replace high fat [foods](#) with low or non-fat equivalents. Good places to start are by replacing full fat dairy products with low or non-fat products such as 1 or 2 percent milk. Replace processed desserts with fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 4 Add fish to your your diet at least twice a week. Fish is typically low in fat and many types such as tuna, mackerel and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that can help to reduce your LDL cholesterol levels. If you don't care for fish, you can find omega-3 fatty acid supplements in your local grocery or health food store. Begin by taking 1,000 to 2,000 mg a day.
- 5 Begin a daily exercise program consisting of 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic exercise. Good choices include walking, running, swimming, cycling and hiking. Exercise not only lowers your LDL levels, but also increases your HDL, or the good type of cholesterol.
- 6 Have your blood drawn again after six months of healthy changes. Compare the results with your physician and dietitian. If you're not seeing the results you expected, make the necessary changes. If, after another few months of changes you're not seeing improvements in your LDL levels, your doctor may consider starting you on cholesterol-lowering medications.

Tips & Warnings

- Start with a complete lipid profile test to determine how much change is necessary. Make slow but gradual improvements. Allow time for your changes to take effect.
- Avoid fad diets or overdoing any of the prescribed routines.