

## ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

Your pharmacist is your medication expert and can provide advice and information on a wide range of health issues

# Cholesterol and Heart Disease

If you have high blood cholesterol, you are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke.

## What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy fat substance that is present in your blood and in your body's cells. Your body needs cholesterol to work properly. But too much can cause fatty deposits (plaque) to build up on your arteries and block the flow of blood. If arteries are blocked, a heart attack or stroke can occur.

Most (80%) of the cholesterol in your body is made by the liver. The rest comes from cholesterol in foods you eat. Only foods with animal fat (e.g., meat, seafood, cheese) contain cholesterol. Foods from plants (e.g., fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts) do not.

## How Can Cholesterol be Both "Good" and "Bad"?

Lipoproteins carry cholesterol through your blood. There are two types: low density lipoproteins (LDL) and high density lipoproteins (HDL). LDL is the "bad" cholesterol because it clogs up your arteries. HDL is "good" because it takes the bad cholesterol away from blood vessels.

## Understanding Cholesterol Levels

You want the level of your good cholesterol (HDL) to be high and your bad cholesterol (LDL) to be

low. You can't feel it if your LDL-cholesterol is high — you'll need a blood test to measure it.

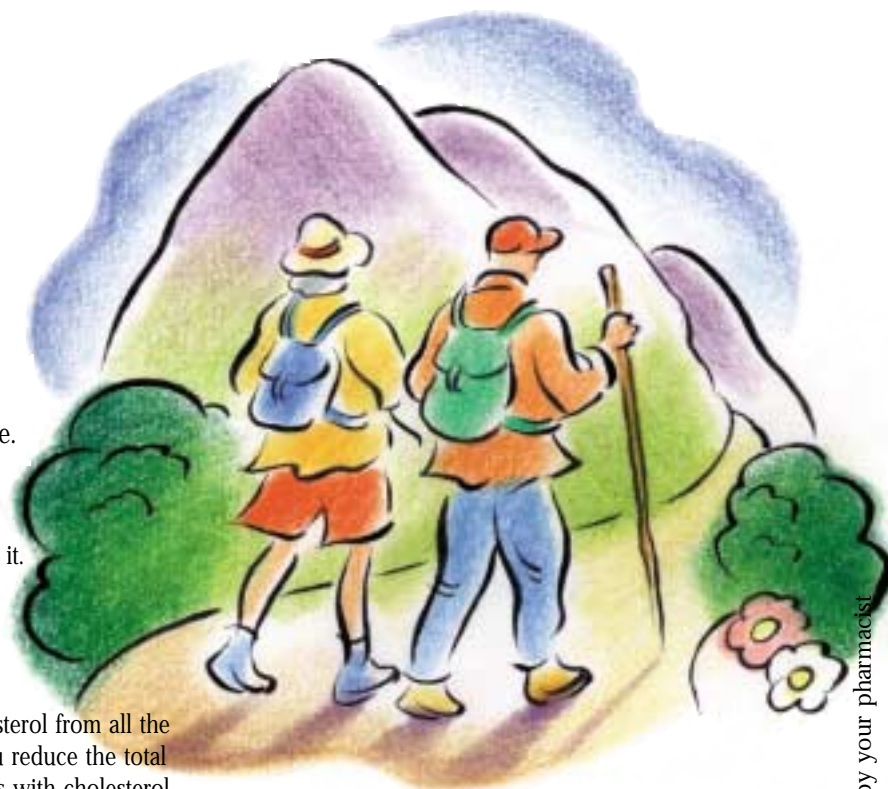
## How Can I Control My Cholesterol?

Diet is key! Your liver makes cholesterol from all the fats you eat. It is important that you reduce the total amount of fat you eat not just foods with cholesterol.

- ◆ Eat a low-fat diet (no more than 30% of daily calories) — eat less meat and saturated fats, cook with little or no fat, choose low-fat foods.
- ◆ Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, cereals and legumes.
- ◆ Lose weight if you are overweight — extra weight can lower your HDL.
- ◆ Be active — exercise helps to control your weight and increases HDL.
- ◆ If you smoke, quit — smoking increases LDL and decreases HDL levels.

## Cholesterol-lowering Medications

For some people, changing what they eat and staying active are not always enough. Your doctor might prescribe a medicine to lower cholesterol. Discuss



with your doctor and pharmacist how to take it and what side effects you might expect. Medicines work best with a healthy lifestyle — you will still need to follow a low-fat diet and stay active.

### Cholesterol Levels\* (in mmol/L)

<b>Total Cholesterol</b>	
Ideal:	less than 5.2
Borderline High:	5.2 to 6.2
High:	more than 6.2
<b>HDL-Cholesterol ("good" cholesterol)</b>	
Desired:	more than 0.9
<b>LDL-Cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol)</b>	
Ideal:	less than 3.5
Borderline High:	3.5 to 3.9
High:	4.0 or more

\*General guide; levels for adults 30 and over

**For more information,  
ASK YOUR PHARMACIST!**