

# Cholesterol

## What It Is

Cholesterol is a **waxy, fat-like substance found in all cells of the body**. Cholesterol is produced by the body (primarily by the liver) and is also consumed from food, referred to as “dietary cholesterol.”

The human body makes all the cholesterol that it needs, so it is not necessary to get cholesterol from food.

## Where It Is Found

Dietary cholesterol is found **only in animal products**, including:

- Beef fat (tallow and suet), chicken fat, and pork fat (lard)
- Dairy products (such as milk, cheese, and yogurt)
- Egg yolks
- Meats and poultry
- Processed meat and poultry products (such as bacon, hot dogs, jerky, some luncheon meats, and sausages)
- Shellfish (such as lobster and shrimp)
- Spreads (such as butter, cream cheese, and sour cream)

## What It Does

- Cholesterol is a structural component of cell membranes.
- Cholesterol is necessary for the production of bile, a fluid made by the liver that aids in the digestion of fat in the intestine.
- Cholesterol is used to make vitamin D and certain hormones, like estrogen and testosterone.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
<b>Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)</b>	
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4g	<b>5%</b>
Saturated Fat 1.5g	<b>8%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 5mg	<b>2%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 430mg	<b>19%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 46g	<b>17%</b>
Dietary Fiber 7g	<b>25%</b>
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	<b>4%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	



## Health Facts

- According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, many foods that are higher in dietary cholesterol are generally higher in saturated fat—and diets higher in saturated fat are associated with an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease.
- The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend keeping the intake of dietary cholesterol **as low as possible** while maintaining a healthy diet.

## Blood Cholesterol

Cholesterol (produced by the body and consumed from food) circulates in the blood and is transported by particles called lipoproteins, which contain both lipid (fat) and protein. There are several types of lipoproteins, and how much you have of each of them is one of the many factors that determine your risk of cardiovascular disease.

- **Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol** is often referred to as “**bad**” cholesterol. It is the form in which cholesterol is carried from the liver *to arteries and body tissues*. Higher levels of LDL cholesterol in the blood can lead to a harmful buildup of cholesterol inside of artery walls. This buildup can increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.
- **High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol** is often referred to as “**good**” cholesterol. It is the form in which cholesterol travels from body tissues *back to the liver*, where it is broken down and removed. Higher levels of HDL cholesterol in the blood can help prevent cholesterol buildup in arteries reducing the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

## ✓ Action Steps

### For Monitoring Cholesterol in Your Diet

Use the **Nutrition Facts** label as a tool for monitoring consumption of cholesterol. The Nutrition Facts label on food and beverage packages shows the amount in milligrams (mg) and the % Daily Value (%DV) of cholesterol per serving of the food.

The Daily Value for cholesterol is less than 300 mg per day.

- Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of cholesterol each day. And remember:
  - 5% DV or less of cholesterol per serving is considered low
  - 20% DV or more of cholesterol per serving is considered high
- Try fish and plant sources of protein (such as beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry.
- Choose lean cuts of meats and poultry. Trim or drain fat from meat before or after cooking and remove poultry skin before eating.
- Substitute fat-free or 1% low-fat dairy products and fortified plant-based beverages (such as soy, rice, and almond) for whole and 2% reduced-fat dairy products.
- Cook and bake with liquid oils (like canola or olive oil) instead of solid fats (like butter, lard, or shortening).
- Opt for foods that do not contain cholesterol and saturated fat, such as beans and peas, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.