

Cholesterol

Use this guide to help you talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about your cholesterol medicines. The guide lists all of the FDA-approved products now available to treat this condition. You will also find some general information to help you use your medicines wisely.

FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Health Information Center

Phone: 301-592-8573
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/infoctr/index.htm>

The National Women's Health Information Center

Phone: 1-800-994-WOMAN (1-800-994-9662)
1-888-220-5446 for the hearing impaired
<http://www.4women.gov/faq/cholesterol.htm>

This guide should not be used in place of talking to your doctor or reading the label on your medicine bottle. The drug and risk information in this guide may change. Check <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/> for the latest facts on each product listed in this guide.



Cholesterol is a kind of fat in your blood. Your body makes its own cholesterol but you also get it from the foods you eat like meat, potato chips, cookies, and eggs. Some people have too much cholesterol in their blood.

Cholesterol can build up on the inside of the blood vessels of your heart. If too much cholesterol builds up, then the blood cannot flow through to your heart. This can cause a heart attack.

Most people do not have any signs of high cholesterol. This only way to know for sure is to go to the doctor and ask for a cholesterol test.

If your doctor tells you that you have high cholesterol, there are things you can do to lower your cholesterol. You can make changes to your diet and exercise at least 30 minutes most days. There are also medicines you can take to help lower your cholesterol.

Use this guide to help you talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about how to best control your cholesterol. This guide lists the different kinds of medicines to control cholesterol. Ask your health care provider to tell you about all of the risks and benefits of taking your cholesterol medicine.

Did you know?

- High cholesterol can raise your chance of having heart attacks and heart disease.
- Women over age 20 should have their cholesterol checked by a doctor.
- Most people do not show any signs of having high cholesterol.
- Sometimes cholesterol can build up in your heart and cause chest pains.
- You can find out your cholesterol number by getting a simple blood test.
- Your total cholesterol number should be under 200.



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Good vs. Bad Cholesterol

Not all cholesterol in your blood is bad for you. There are three kinds of blood cholesterol that you should know about: HDL (good cholesterol), LDL, (bad cholesterol), and triglycerides. Check out the chart below to learn more about good and bad cholesterol.

	Good Cholesterol	Bad Cholesterol
What is it called?	HDL	LDL
What does it do to your heart?	<p style="text-align: center;">Helps to keep the arteries from clogging up</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Protects against heart disease</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Builds up and blocks your arteries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Helps to cause heart disease</p>
What should your cholesterol number be?	Good level = 60mg/dL or Higher	<p style="text-align: center;">Good level = Less than 100mg/dL if you have high risk for heart disease</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Less than 130mg/dL if you are otherwise healthy</p>

Triglycerides are another form of fat in your blood that can raise your risk for heart disease. You may need treatment if your triglycerides are:

- Borderline High (150-199 mg/dL)
- High (200 mg/dL or more)

Medicines to Control Cholesterol

There are different kinds of medicines to control cholesterol.

- **HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors** (also called **Statins**)
- **Bile Acid Sequestrants**
- **Fibrates**
- **Niacin**
- **Combination Drugs**
- **Other Cholesterol Drugs**

There are many different medicines in each group. These medicines are listed on the next few pages. You will also find some general information about the safety warnings and side effects for the different kinds of medicine to control cholesterol. This guide only talks about some of the risks of taking these medicines. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about all of the risks of taking your medicine.

Write down the important facts about your medicine here.

HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors (also called **Statins**)

Brand Name	Generic Name
Altoprev	Lovastatin
Crestor	Rosuvastatin
Lescol	Fluvastatin
Lipitor	Atorvastatin
Mevacor	Lovastatin
Pravachol	Pravastatin
Zocor	Simvastatin

For up-to-date information about the risks and side effects for each drug
Check <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/>

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What drugs am I taking?

- What are the side effects?

- What other prescription drugs should I avoid while taking my medicines?

- What foods, herbs, or over-the-counter medicines should I avoid?

- When should I take each drug? How many times a day do I take each drug?

- Can I take my medicines if I am pregnant or nursing?

Other Drugs

Brand Name	Generic Name
Zetia	Ezetimibe

Other Drugs: What You Should Know

Warnings

- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not take Zetia with another cholesterol medicine.
- People who have liver disease should not take Zetia with another cholesterol medicine.
- Use caution if you are taking blood thinners (anticoagulants).

Common Side Effects

- Feeling Tired
- Stomach Pain

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Muscle Pain, Tenderness, or Weakness
- Stomach Pain
- Swelling of the Face or Lips
- Severe Itching

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Statins: What You Should Know

Warnings

- Do not use these medicines if you have liver disease.
- Do not use these medicines if you are pregnant or nursing.
- Use these medicines with caution if you are also taking Gemfibrozil, Amiodarone, Verapamil, or blood thinners (anticoagulants).
- People who use some HIV medicines, birth control pills (oral contraceptives), Nefazodone, and niacin should talk to their doctor about the specific risks of using Statins.
- Drinking large amounts of grapefruit juice everyday may affect these “Statin” medicines.

Common Side Effects

- Gas
- Dizziness
- Constipation
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Upset Stomach

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Fever
- Dark Urine
- Muscle Pain
- Muscle Weakness

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Bile Acid Sequestrants

Brand Name	Generic Name
Colestid	Colestipol
LoCholest	Cholestyramine
Prevalite	Cholestyramine
Questran (oral powder)	Cholestyramine
Welchol	Colesevelam

Combination Drugs

Brand Name	Generic Name
Vytorin	Ezetimibe and Simvastatin
Advicor	Niacin and Lovastatin

Combination Drugs: What You Should Know

Warnings

- Do not take Vytorin or Advicor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Do not take Vytorin if you have liver disease.
- People taking Gemfibrozil (Lopid), Fenofibrate (Tricor), high blood pressure medicines, Protease Inhibitors (medicines to treat HIV), or blood thinners (anticoagulants) should use caution when taking Vytorin or Advicor.
- If you drink large amounts of grapefruit juice everyday, it may affect Advicor.

Common Side Effects

- Headache
- Flushing (Redness of the Face or Neck)
- Upset Stomach

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Dark Urine
- Stomach Pain
- Muscle Pain, Tenderness or Weakness
- Jaundice (Skin or Eyes Look Yellow)

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Niacin

Brand Name	Generic Name
Niaspan	Niacin

Niacin: What You Should Know

Warnings

- Do not use Niaspan if you have liver disease or if you are taking an immediate-release niacin pill.
- Do not use Niaspan if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- People who are taking aspirin, high blood pressure medicines, HMG CoA Reductase Inhibitors (“Statins”), or medicines to lower bile acid should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking Niacin (Niaspan).
- People with kidney disease, peptic ulcer, diabetes, or chest pain should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking this drug.
- People who have had a heart attack or gout should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking this drug.

Common Side Effects

- Headache
- Upset Stomach
- Heartburn
- Diarrhea
- Flushing (Redness of the Face or Neck)

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Fast Heartbeat
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Jaundice (Skin or Eyes Look Yellow)

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Bile Acid Sequestrants: What You Should Know

Warnings

- Do not use these drugs if you have problems with your liver or gallbladder.
- People who have bleeding problems, heart disease, stomach ulcers, kidney disease, or an under-active thyroid should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking these medicines.
- People who take Spironolactone should talk to their doctor before taking Colestipol (Colestid).

Common Side Effects

- Heartburn
- Constipation
- Gas
- Indigestion
- Nausea

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Stomach Pain
- Vomiting
- Sudden Weight Loss
- Unusual Bleeding From Gums or Rectum

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Fibrates

Brand Name	Generic Name
Lopid	Gemfibrozil
Tricor	Fenofibrate
Antara	Fenofibrate
Triglide	Fenofibrate

Fibrates: What You Should Know

Warnings

- People with kidney problems, gallbladder disease, or liver disease should not use these drugs.
- Do not use these drugs if you are taking other medicines to control cholesterol (HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors also called “Statins”).
- Pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking these drugs.
- People who take diabetes medicines or blood thinners (anticoagulants) should talk to their doctor about the risks of taking these drugs.

Common Side Effects

- Headache
- Constipation or Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Stomach Pain
- Flushing (Redness of the Face or Neck)

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Muscle Pain
- Weakness
- Jaundice (Skin or Eyes Look Yellow)

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