

Adding physical activity, even in short intervals several times a day, can help you begin to lose weight. Consider:

- Taking a brisk daily walk during your lunch hour
- Riding your bike to work
- Playing a favourite sport

Exercise Regularly



3. Backyard gardening

Inter-linking to points 1 and 2 above, backyard gardening will not only engage you in physical activity, but will also provide healthy and nutritious fruits and vegetable. Additionally, as Fiji is currently facing an increase in inflation (increase in cost of living) due to international and external factors beyond our control, back yard gardening will assist you in;

- a. Saving the money which would otherwise be spent on buying food items;
- b. Earning additional cash by selling surplus produce; and
- c. Allocating the money saved on other important household needs.



If lifestyle changes aren't enough ...

Sometimes healthy lifestyle changes aren't enough to lower cholesterol levels. If your doctor recommends medication to help lower your cholesterol, take it as prescribed while continuing your lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes can help you keep your medication dose low.



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REDUCE CHOLESTEROL INTAKE

Make Smart Consumption Choices



According to Ministry of Health and Medical Services, one of the major risks to Fiji's population is the rising crisis of non-communicable diseases (NCD's).

What are Non-Communicable Diseases?

An NCD is not a disease passed from person to person, but develops in your body due to different causes, some within your control and some not. NCD's develop over a long time as they progress slowly. One of the major types of NCD are cardiovascular diseases (heart disease such as heart attacks and stroke). Whilst cardiovascular diseases are extremely prevalent, it is important to understand what are its major risk factors so that as consumers, we can change our consumption patterns.

The World Health Organization's World Health Report identified high cholesterol as one of the most important risk factors for NCD's.

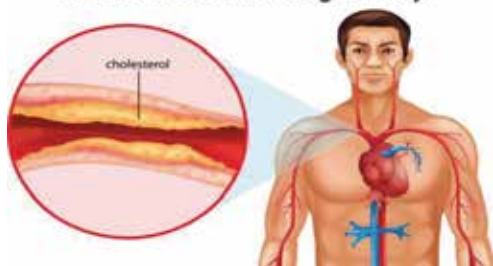
What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatty substance produced naturally by your liver and found in your blood.

Cholesterol is used for many different things in your body, but it can become a problem when there is too much of it in your blood.

High levels of cholesterol in your blood are mainly caused by eating foods that are not part of a heart-healthy eating pattern. By following a heart-healthy eating pattern, you will be eating in a way that is naturally low in unhealthy fats and high in healthy fats.

Cholesterol Blocking Artery



What causes high cholesterol?

According to the State Government of Victoria's Department of Health, 'Better Health Channel' causes of high cholesterol include:

- High intake of foods containing unhealthy fats (saturated fats and trans fats) – such as fatty meats and deli-style meats, butter, cream, ice cream, coconut oil, palm oil and most deep-fried takeaway foods and commercially baked products (such as pies, biscuits, buns and pastries).
- Low intake of foods containing healthy fats – healthy fats tend to increase the good (HDL) cholesterol. Foods containing healthy fats include avocado, nuts, seeds, olives, cooking oils made from plants or seeds, and fish.



- Low intake of foods containing fibre – foods that are high in dietary fibre, particularly soluble fibre, can reduce the amount of bad (LDL) cholesterol in your blood.
- Low levels of physical activity and exercise.
- Being overweight or obese and having too much body fat around your middle.
- Smoking can lead to high cholesterol levels.
- Genetics – your family history may affect your cholesterol level. In some families, several people might be diagnosed with high cholesterol or heart disease at a relatively young age (men below age 55 years and women below 65 years). This type of pattern can be caused by genetics, including a genetic condition called familial hypercholesterolaemia. Its best to speak to your doctor as soon as possible if you think you might be affected.
- Drinking too much alcohol.

Top 3 lifestyle changes to improve your cholesterol

1. Eat heart-healthy foods

A few changes in your diet can reduce cholesterol and improve your heart health:

- **Reduce saturated fats.** Saturated fats, found primarily in red meat and full-fat dairy products, raise your total cholesterol. Decreasing your consumption of saturated fats can reduce your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol – the "bad" cholesterol.
- **Eliminate trans fats.** Trans fats, sometimes listed on food labels as "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil," are often used in margarine and store-bought cookies, crackers and cakes. Trans fats raise overall cholesterol levels.
- **Eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids.** Omega-3 fatty acids do not affect LDL cholesterol. However, they have other heart-healthy benefits, including reducing blood pressure. Foods with omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, mackerel, herring, walnuts and flaxseeds.

Eat Healthy Food



2. Exercise on most days of the week and increase your physical activity

Moderate physical activity can help raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, the "good" cholesterol. With your doctors advise, work up to at least 30 minutes of exercise five times a week or other recommended physical activity.