



Dr Christopher Flood BMedSc, MBBS (Hons), FRACP
INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST

KEEPING YOUR CHOLESTEROL LOW

Your body needs some cholesterol to work the right way. Things can go horribly wrong for your heart when the body has too much **bad** cholesterol. Bad cholesterol is low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. A build-up of this, leads to cholesterol in the arteries, which leads to heart disease.

If Dr Flood is concerned with your cholesterol, he will ask you to undertake a blood test that will come back with a variety of results and tell you whether cholesterol is a concern for you. Interestingly, you will also get a reading of good cholesterol or high-density lipoprotein (HDL). The higher your HDL cholesterol level, the lower your chance of getting heart disease.

What Happens?

Cholesterol can build up on the walls of your arteries (blood vessels) and because these vessels carry blood to and from the heart, this can cause serious problems. As the build-up increases, narrowings occur. This buildup of cholesterol in the arteries is called plaque and we often hear it called "hardening of the arteries". The build-up slows down or stops the flow of blood and the amount of oxygen-rich blood is decreased. When this happens you have what is called **coronary artery disease** (CAD).

Another outcome of bad cholesterol is **Angina**. Angina happens when the heart does not receive enough oxygen-rich blood. The release of fat and cholesterol may also cause your blood to clot and a clot can block the flow of blood and can cause angina or a heart attack.

Lowering your cholesterol level decreases your chance for having a plaque burst and cause a heart attack. Lowering cholesterol may also slow down, reduce, or even stop plaque from building up.

Lowering Cholesterol – What should you do?

- Limit the amount of saturated fat you eat. You should still eat limited good fats such as those found in margarine (But remember not to overeat as weight gain is a problem)
- Eat enough kilojoules to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.
- Increase the soluble fiber in your diet.
- Regular physical activity is a must for everyone. It can help raise HDL levels and lower LDL levels. Along with suggesting that you change the way you eat and exercise regularly, Dr Flood may prescribe medicines to help lower your cholesterol.