

## Monthly Health Challenge™



# Control Your Cholesterol

**CHALLENGE**  
Practice healthy habits to control this blood fat

## Requirements to complete this Health Challenge™

1. Read "Control Your Cholesterol."
2. Practice healthy habits to lower your cholesterol on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



**M**ark Spitz stood at the edge of the pool waiting for the signal. He knew millions of people would be watching. At go-time, he hit the water with powerful strokes, speed, and stamina to outperform his competitors.

He dominated swimming events as a world-class athlete. He won nine Olympic gold medals, one silver, and one bronze, during his career. He quit competing at age 22. And his record was unmatched for nearly 40 years. His record was broken by Michael Phelps – the first and only swimmer to beat his record. Many people remember Spitz as an accomplished Olympic athlete. But many don't know he has high cholesterol.

"People don't believe that I have high cholesterol," Spitz said in an interview before the Beijing Olympics. In his case, a good diet and exercise aren't enough to keep his levels low. So he takes medicine every day.

How's your cholesterol level? If you don't know, you're not alone. About 1 in 3 adults has high cholesterol. Left unchecked, high cholesterol raises your risk for heart disease and a long list of other health problems. In most cases, just a few changes can bring it down. Take the month-long health challenge to *Control Your Cholesterol*.

How much do you know about high cholesterol? Take this quiz to find out.

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1.     Eating foods high in saturated fat like red meat, whole milk, and fried foods can cause high cholesterol.
2.   Regular exercise can help raise HDL or "good" cholesterol levels.
3.   You can usually tell if you have high cholesterol by the way you feel.
4.   High levels of LDL or "bad" cholesterol raise your risk for a heart attack or stroke.
5.   Eating foods high in fiber like whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables can help control cholesterol levels.

Your diet and exercise habits have a big impact on your cholesterol levels. Smoking and being overweight can, too. Your genetics can make you prone to high levels – just like Spitz. But you'll need a blood test to find out your level. High cholesterol has no symptoms. Practice healthy lifestyle habits to manage your cholesterol. Take medicine if necessary.

Answers: 1. True 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True

About 1 out of every 3 adults has high cholesterol. And you might not even know it. High cholesterol exhibits few symptoms. A simple blood test can measure your cholesterol. Find out before it's too late. High cholesterol is a major risk factor for a heart attack or stroke.

Everyone should have a blood test to measure cholesterol, starting at age 35. Start having it checked at age 20 if you smoke or have diabetes, or if heart disease runs in your family. Get it checked at least once every 5 years – more often if it is high. Your doctor may recommend more frequent tests.

## Ways to Control Cholesterol

Your habits have a big impact on cholesterol levels. And as Spitz found out, so can genetics. Even if your cholesterol levels are well outside the healthy range, you can still improve them. And sometimes quickly, with small, steady changes. Here are some ways to help control cholesterol:

- **Reduce saturated fat.** Saturated fats are found in foods like red meat, whole milk, cheese, ice cream, butter, coconut fat, cream, lard, and foods made with these items.

- **Choose polyunsaturated fat.** This healthy fat helps reduce cholesterol and lower the risk of heart problems. Find it in: olives, avocados, nuts, and seeds. It's also in healthy oils like olive, soy, and canola oil.

Control cholesterol with the DASH Diet  
[tinyurl.com/mdbhw7w](https://tinyurl.com/mdbhw7w)

- **Limit or avoid dietary cholesterol.** Foods to avoid include processed meats, egg yolks, fast food, and pastries. If you choose to eat eggs, limit yourself to 2 or 3 a week. Substitute 2 egg whites for a whole egg in recipes. Try tofu or other vegetable proteins as a healthy alternative to meat.

- **Eat foods high in fiber.** The fiber in whole grains lowers cholesterol levels. Oats, barley, and brown rice have good fiber. So do fruits and vegetables. When you eat a lot of these foods, your blood pressure drops. So do mortality rates for heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Of all foods, legumes are the highest in dietary fiber and are also good sources of vegetable protein.

How to lower cholesterol without drugs  
[tinyurl.com/nj87zdd](https://tinyurl.com/nj87zdd)

- **Exercise.** Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes a day. Pick an activity you enjoy, and make it a daily habit. Spitz still enjoys swimming. Walking will work just fine, too.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** If you need to lose weight, set a goal to lose 10 to 15 pounds at a time. Even a little weight loss can make a big difference.

- **Take medicine if you need to.** Healthy habits should come first to control cholesterol. But if that's not enough, medication can help.

What your cholesterol levels mean  
[tinyurl.com/j4esw48](https://tinyurl.com/j4esw48)

## Cholesterol...

... is a waxy, fatty substance your body makes on its own. It is in your arteries with blood cells.

**You need it to:**

- Produce hormones
- Make vitamin D
- Help digest fat
- Keep your brain healthy

**Heart health**  
 If you have a lot of cholesterol (High Cholesterol), it can get stuck to artery walls when blood passes through your heart.

**High cholesterol is caused by:**

- Poor eating habits
- Lack of exercise
- Overweight/obesity
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Genetics

**Over time, cholesterol can:**

- Limit or block blood flow
- Raise blood pressure
- Increase the risk for a heart attack or stroke.

**To control cholesterol:**

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Don't smoke.
- Take medication if necessary.
- Get tested to measure cholesterol levels.

### What should your cholesterol level be?

Your doctor will compare your results with recommended, healthy levels of cholesterol. Here's what you need to know:

Type	What it is	Recommended levels
Total cholesterol	All cholesterol combined	Keep levels below 200 mg/dl
LDL (bad) cholesterol	Main source of cholesterol that blocks arteries	Less than 100 mg/dl is ideal for most people.
HDL (good) cholesterol	Helps keep cholesterol from blocking arteries	HDL levels of 60 mg/dl or more. 40 mg/dl or less raises your risk for heart disease.
Triglycerides	Another form of fat in your blood	Higher than 150 mg/dl is a risk factor for heart disease that needs attention.

Sources: American Heart Association.; National Cholesterol Education Program.; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



## Health Challenge™ Calendar

# Control Your Cholesterol Level

**CHALLENGE**  
Practice healthy habits to control this blood fat

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you practice healthy habits to control cholesterol.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to control cholesterol.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you take action to control cholesterol. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I took action to control my cholesterol  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_