American Heart Association®
Life's Essential 8™ → for kids

BUILDING BLOCKS

Our bodies make cholesterol naturally, and we can also get it from some of the foods we eat. Cholesterol is a type of fat that travels through our blood to different parts of our body. It helps build our cells and makes some important hormones. It is found in foods that come from animals.

Imagine cholesterol as little helpers in our bodies. They are like tiny workers that help build and repair our cells, which are like the building blocks of our bodies. But just like with toys or treats, too much cholesterol can be a problem. It's like having too many workers in one place and things start to build up and get messy.

There are two types of cholesterol: HDL (high-density lipoprotein) and LDL (low-density lipoprotein).

- HDL cholesterol is the "good" cholesterol because it helps remove the extra cholesterol we don't need from our blood.
- LDL cholesterol is like the "bad" cholesterol because too much of it can build up in our blood vessels and make it harder for our hearts to pump blood. It's like when something clogs a pipe, and the water can't flow properly.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8forkids

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

We can help keep our cholesterol levels healthy by doing a few things:

🍎 **Eating healthy foods**

🚲 **Being active**

🥛 **Drinking water**

If someone's cholesterol levels are too high, a doctor might suggest special medicine or changes in what they eat to help keep them in a healthy range. Medicine is usually needed if you have Familial Hypercholesterolemia (FH), which is when your body has a hard time recycling your LDL cholesterol. FH is hereditary, meaning it is passed on to you from one or both parents.

SCREEN FOR HIGH CHOLESTEROL Children with high cholesterol are usually healthy and have no symptoms. The only way to know if your child has high cholesterol is to be screened. Talk to your pediatrician. Kids should have their cholesterol checked at least once between 9-11 years old and again between 17-21 years old.