

## Cholesterol and HIV

**Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is produced in the liver from the food we eat. Although it is required for the body to perform many functions, too much cholesterol can have negative health consequences.**

**There are two types of cholesterol, LDL (which is called “bad” cholesterol) and HDL (known as “good” cholesterol). A blood test is needed to measure them.**

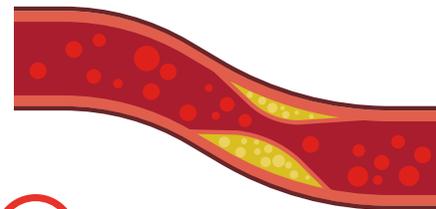
Although cholesterol is necessary for health, it is better to have higher levels of HDL cholesterol and lower levels of LDL cholesterol. If LDL cholesterol levels are high, it can build up on the walls of the arteries and form plaques that cause the arteries to narrow. This narrowing can lead to problems for the heart and brain.

People with HIV may run a higher risk of cholesterol problems because of the action of the virus itself and the side effects of certain drugs.

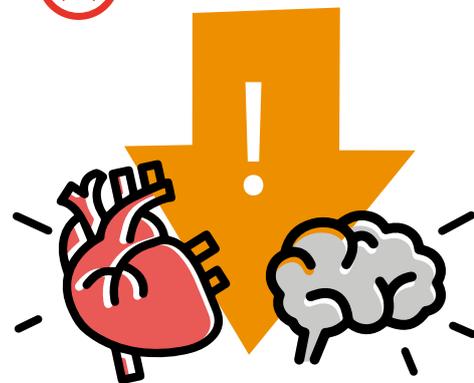
Many people with high cholesterol show no symptoms, so it is very important to have routine checks. People with HIV have their blood cholesterol and fat levels monitored as part of their routine care.



NORMAL ARTERY



NARROWED ARTERY



There are different measures that can be taken to prevent high cholesterol levels:



Reduce fat consumption in general and replace saturated fats (butter, cheese, etc.) with unsaturated fats (olive oil, avocado, oily fish, etc.).



Stopping smoking and reducing or avoiding alcohol will also help to keep cholesterol under control.



Include fruit, vegetables and generally fibre-rich foods in your diet.



It is important to measure cholesterol levels as part of HIV care and to maintain a healthy body weight.



Do regular aerobic exercise.

Sometimes, however, these lifestyle changes are not enough to control cholesterol and there is no choice but to take medication. Your HIV doctor, or your family doctor, will advise you on the treatment that best suits you and make sure it does not interact with your antiretroviral medication.

## Main points:

There are very often no symptoms of high cholesterol levels.

It is important for routine HIV care to include measurements of cholesterol levels.

Sometimes making lifestyle changes can help to control cholesterol levels.

**gt** grupo de trabajo sobre tratamientos del VIH  
ENTIDAD DECLARADA DE UTILIDAD PÚBLICA  
ONG DE DESARROLLO



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SOBRE EL TEMA?  
PREGÚNTANOS

Tel. 93 458 26 41

### Disclaimer

The information on this sheet is not intended to replace a doctor's advice. Health decisions should always be taken after consulting health professionals. Medical information can quickly become outdated.

If you have any questions after reading this sheet, you should talk to your doctor or nurse, or call gTt-VIH on 93 458 26 41 to find out whether there have been any significant new developments.

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