Cholesterol

High cholesterol affects 42% of South Carolina adults and contributes to more than 4,000 South Carolina deaths each year. What is cholesterol? Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in your body and there are several types:

- **LDL Cholesterol**: Low-density lipoprotein: "bad" cholesterol - it can clog arteries, increasing your risk for heart disease. You want your LDL cholesterol to be **LOW**.
- **HDL Cholesterol**: High-density lipoprotein: "good" cholesterol - it helps keep arteries clear by mopping up bad cholesterol and carrying it to your liver, which then flushes it out of your body. You want your HDL cholesterol to be **HIGH**.
- **Triglycerides**: not actually cholesterol, but similar because they are fats that can clog arteries. Often, blood tests include triglycerides with checking cholesterol levels.

**Risk Factors for High Cholesterol:**

- **Gender**: After menopause women's LDL cholesterol tends to go up
- **Age**: Women 55 and older and men 45 and older are at higher risk for high cholesterol
- **Family History**: A first degree relative with early heart disease means you're at higher risk for high cholesterol
- **Diet**: A diet high in saturated fat is a risk factor for high cholesterol
- **Weight**: Being overweight decreases HDL cholesterol and increases LDL cholesterol
- **Physical Inactivity**: Exercise lowers LDL cholesterol and raises HDL cholesterol...it can also help you lose weight!

**Know Your Numbers**

Since high cholesterol does not have any symptoms, it is important to get a
blood test to check your levels. Here are the desired numbers:

- Total Cholesterol: less than 200 mg/dL
- LDL "Bad" Cholesterol: less than 100 mg/dL
- HDL "Good" Cholesterol: more than 40 mg/dL
- Triglycerides: less than 150 mg/dL

Lowering your cholesterol will lower your risk of heart disease. If you have high cholesterol, read below for steps you can take to control your cholesterol:

**Eat a healthy diet!** Avoid foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol. Avoid trans fats--if the label says "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil", you don't want it! Choose foods that have "0 grams" of trans fat on the label. Eat 5+ fruits and vegetables every day. Eat 4+ servings of fiber. Don't forget to drink lots of water!

**Exercise!** Physical activity raises HDL "good" cholesterol. Try to exercise for 30 minutes 3-5 times per week.

**Don't smoke!** Smoking lowers HDL "good" cholesterol. Check out our [CUQuit link](#) to find programs to help you quit smoking.

If you have any of the risk factors for high cholesterol, simple blood tests can be done to check your numbers. The Joseph F. Sullivan Center also offers a cholesterol level screening, among other tests, with our [CU4Health Program](#). Call us at (864) 656 3076 to make an appointment today!

*Information provided by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control*