

## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Cholesterol

To make sure your cardiovascular risk is as low as possible, you and your doctor will need to work together to optimize your cholesterol levels. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>Atherosclerosis</b>	Also known as “hardening of the arteries,” atherosclerosis is a chronic, progressive disease in which plaques build up in the walls of the arteries. These plaques can eventually rupture, interrupting blood flow to vital organs such as the heart and brain, causing heart attacks and strokes. The reason doctors worry about cholesterol is that abnormal cholesterol levels can accelerate atherosclerosis.
<b>Lipids</b>	Lipids are organic compounds that are not soluble in water. When doctors say “lipids,” they are generally referring to organic fats, in particular, to cholesterol and triglycerides.
<b>Cholesterol</b>	Cholesterol is a lipid used by the body for many vital functions, including building cell membranes and making important hormones. However, when blood cholesterol levels become abnormal, atherosclerosis tends to worsen more rapidly.
<b>Lipoproteins</b>	Lipoproteins are large complexes, consisting of proteins and lipids, that circulate in the bloodstream. Their chief function is to transport various lipids throughout the body.
<b>HDL Cholesterol</b>	Cholesterol in the blood that is carried by high-density lipoprotein is called HDL cholesterol. This lipoprotein removes excess cholesterol from the blood vessel walls, so higher HDL levels tend to correlate with a reduced risk of atherosclerosis. For this reason, HDL cholesterol is often called “good cholesterol.”
<b>LDL Cholesterol</b>	Cholesterol in the blood that is carried by low-density lipoprotein is called LDL cholesterol. The low-density lipoprotein can deposit cholesterol in the blood vessel walls, so higher LDL cholesterol levels correlate with accelerated atherosclerosis. This is why LDL cholesterol is often called “bad cholesterol.” When your doctor is worried about your cholesterol levels, it is almost always the LDL cholesterol levels that cause the concern.
<b>Triglycerides</b>	Fat is stored in the body in the form of triglycerides, making triglycerides (consisting of three fatty acid groups attached to glycerol), the most common type of lipid found in the body. High triglyceride blood levels are also associated with an increased cardiovascular risk.

