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Steps to Lowering Your Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that is found in your blood and travels throughout your body. It comes from two sources. It is made in your liver and it is also found in the foods you eat. Meat and dairy products are the main foods that have cholesterol. When you have more cholesterol in your body than it needs, you have what is called hyperlipidemia or high cholesterol. Cholesterol does not mix well with blood; sort of like oil and water. High cholesterol can lead to a heart attack, stroke, or other heart diseases.

Follow these steps to lower your cholesterol:

Step 1

Talk to your provider. Learn about the different types of cholesterol:

- **HDL cholesterol** – is the good cholesterol. HDL removes cholesterol from artery walls and takes it to the liver for removal from the body.
- **LDL cholesterol** – is the bad cholesterol. LDL is bad because it deposits cholesterol on the walls of your arteries. This increases the risk for heart disease.
- **Triglycerides** – are another form of fat that is carried in your blood. High triglyceride levels also increase the risk for heart disease.

Your provider can help you learn how to lower your LDL cholesterol. Here are some of the things that can help:

- Reduce foods that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol
- Lose weight if needed
- Exercise
- Quit smoking
- Take a cholesterol lowering medicine

Here are some things that might cause high cholesterol:

- Diabetes
- Stress
- Low thyroid function
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease
- Some medicines
- Polycystic ovary syndrome

- Family history of high cholesterol

Step 2

Change your diet. Choose foods that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Limit the amount of high fat foods you eat from animal products. These include:

- Whole milk, cheese and yogurt
- Eggs
- Poultry (with the skin on)
- Red meat or organ meats (such as kidney or liver)
- Butter/lard (or foods made in or with them)
- Shellfish (such as shrimp or crab)

Saturated fat is also found in some vegetable oils. Limit the use of these oils. These include:

- Coconut oil
- Palm oil
- Cocoa butter

Eat less food that is:

- Fried or deep fried
- Processed (packaged or commercially made)
- Made with hard margarine

Step 3

Be active! Talk with your provider before you begin any exercise plan. The best kinds of exercise are:

- Brisk walking
- Swimming
- Running
- Jumping rope

These exercises help your heart and lungs. They help by increasing your heart rate and oxygen use. Try to do 30 minutes of exercise at least 5 days a week. Regular exercise can lower bad LDL cholesterol and raise good HDL cholesterol. It will also improve your overall health.

Step 4

Lose weight if you are overweight. Losing even a small amount of weight can help lower your cholesterol. These levels tend to rise in both men and women as they get older. If you can shed those extra pounds now, it may be easier than waiting to do it later.

Step 5

Quit smoking. One of the best things you can do for your body is to stop smoking. If you have high cholesterol and smoke, your risks for heart disease and lung disease are doubled. Once

you decide to quit, Molina Healthcare can help you with a stop smoking program. Call the Member Services number on your Molina Healthcare member card and ask about the stop smoking program.

Step 6

Take your medicine. If you have done all of the above and still have high cholesterol, you may need to take a cholesterol lowering medicine. Adding a medicine to the changes you have already made may be just the answer to lowering your cholesterol.

Once you have lowered your cholesterol levels:

- Stay with your treatment plan
- See your provider on a regular basis
- Keep taking your medicine
- Have your cholesterol levels checked often

This chart will help you set your heart healthy goals.

Heart Numbers	Goal
Total Cholesterol	Desirable: Less than 200 mg/dL Borderline: 200-239 mg/dL High: higher than 240 mg/dL
LDL (Bad) Cholesterol	Optimal: Less than 100 mg/dL Near optimal/Above optimal: 100-129 mg/dL Borderline High: 130-159 mg/dL High: 160-189 mg/dL Very high: Higher than 190 mg/dL
HDL (Good) Cholesterol	Women: 50 mg/dL or higher Men: 40 mg/dL or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL
Blood Pressure	People who have: Low risk for heart disease: Less than 120/80 mm Hg Hypertension: Less than 140/90 mm Hg Hypertention and diabetes: Less than 130/80 mm Hg