



CHCHD News

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Be Heart Smart, September is Cholesterol Education Month

Chattanooga, TN - High blood cholesterol is a serious condition that affects over 65 million Americans and it increases your risk for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the U.S., according to the National Institutes of Health.

"The higher your cholesterol level, the greater the risk of coronary heart disease. Knowing and understanding what your cholesterol levels are and what the numbers mean is important. This is the first step to find out if lifestyle changes are necessary to decrease the [LDL](#) (bad) cholesterol or increase the [HDL](#) (good) cholesterol. Typically, no signs or symptoms are associated with high cholesterol. The only way to find out if it is too high is through a blood test," said Jill Heine, health educator with the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department.

When too much LDL cholesterol is in the blood, it builds up in the walls of the arteries. Eventually, the arteries become narrowed and blood flow to the heart is slowed down or blocked, which may result in a heart attack.

The National Institute of Health's Cholesterol Education Program recommends that adults aged 20 and older have their cholesterol checked every five years, citing compelling evidence that shows buildup of plaque in arteries begins in childhood and progresses slowly into adulthood.

According to the American Heart Association, high cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. Some risk factors such as age, sex, and heredity are unchangeable.

"However, risk factors that can be changed include eating heart-healthy foods, getting enough physical activity, not smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight," Heine added.

For more information on cholesterol or to schedule a screening, contact your healthcare provider. You can also find additional resources on our website at www.health.hamiltontn.org, or at <http://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/index.htm>.

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