



EmblemHealth[®]

WHAT CARE FEELS LIKE.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHOLESTEROL



WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy type of fat that is found in your blood. Cholesterol floats in your blood and can get into the walls of your arteries (blood vessels or tubes that carry blood away from the heart to the rest of the body), and stay there. If you have too much cholesterol in your arteries, it can build up and cause the artery walls to narrow.



This can clog the arteries and keep blood from moving freely to the heart and brain, which can cause a heart attack or stroke.

What are the signs and symptoms?

High cholesterol usually has no signs or symptoms. In fact, many people do not know that their cholesterol is too high.

How is it found?

A simple blood test called a lipid panel can check cholesterol levels. Before the test, you will need to fast (not eat or drink anything but water) for 9 to 12 hours.

What increases the chance of having high cholesterol?

Things that can increase the chance of high cholesterol include:

- Age
- Race
- Family history
- Having diabetes
- Eating a high-fat diet
- Not being physically active
- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Having certain diseases

How is it treated?

The doctor may have you exercise and change your diet. If that does not help, your doctor may prescribe a statin medicine. Statins lower the amount of cholesterol your body makes and should be taken every day, or exactly as your doctor ordered. Your cholesterol may get worse if you forget to take your statin medicine.

Other treatments include:

- Losing weight
- Quitting smoking

Is it OK to skip a dose of cholesterol medicine?

You need to take your medicine every day to help lower your chance of having long-term effects from high cholesterol.

If you are finding it hard to take your medicine on time, see the “Hints to Help You Remember to Take Your Medicine” in this pamphlet or talk to your doctor.

What can happen if cholesterol is not controlled?

If you are skipping doses of your medicine or do not follow your doctor’s plan to treat your high cholesterol, you may increase your chance of:

- Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Heart disease
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Blood clots
- Death

The medicine your doctor prescribed can help keep your high cholesterol under control. But if you don't take your medicine exactly as your doctor ordered, you increase your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

This pamphlet can help you get the most out of your medicine. Read the hints below and go over the "Questions for Your Doctor" during your next office visit.

HINTS TO HELP YOU REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR MEDICINE

- Make taking your cholesterol medicine part of your daily routine. Use a pillbox to store your medicine and leave it where you brush your teeth to help you remember to take it.
- Set the alarm on your watch, clock or cell phone to help remind you to take your medicine at the right time.
- Some medicines work better when taken with food while others do not. If your medicine should be taken with food, keep it on the kitchen counter as a reminder to take it with your meal.
- Ask a friend or family member to call you to help remind you to take your medicine. It's a great way to stay in touch too!

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

1. Why am I taking this medicine and how will it help my high cholesterol? _____

2. How often and at what times of the day should I take this medicine? _____

3. What should I do if I miss a dose? _____

4. Should I take all the medicine even though I feel fine? _____

5. How can I tell if this medicine is working? Are there any tests I need while taking this medicine? _____

6. Are there any side effects from this medicine? _____

7. How long will I need to take this medicine? Do I need a refill? _____

8. Does my prescription drug plan cover this medicine? Is there a generic option available? _____

9. Can I get a 90-day supply? Can I order this medicine through the mail? _____

If you have questions about your prescription drug coverage, we can help. Visit **www.emblemhealth.com/pharmacy** or call Customer Service at the phone number on the back of your ID card.

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