

Raised cholesterol

Your bloods show raised a total raised cholesterol (>5) and within that you have a higher ratio of bad cholesterol (LDL) to good cholesterol (HDL).

We need cholesterol in our bodies but too much bad cholesterol (LDL) can furr up arteries increasing the risk of conditions such as heart attack or stroke. In contrast, good cholesterol (HDL) helps clear arteries and reduce LDL cholesterol.

It is a very common finding in blood tests to find a raised total cholesterol with more LDL cholesterol than HDL. These are usually due to lifestyle factors and common causes are:

- A diet of cholesterol heavy foods such as fried foods, creams, butter, cheese, prawns and foods high in saturated fats such as crisps.
- Too much alcohol. This can raise cholesterol levels and another fat called triglyceride.
- Lack of exercise as exercise helps your body reduce LDL cholesterol and increase the good HDL cholesterol.
- Being overweight or obese increases LDL cholesterol
- Smoking which can reduce HDL cholesterol levels and make LDL cholesterol stickier.

However, for some people, no matter how good their lifestyle is they just produce more cholesterol in their body. This is due to their genes. Generally, in these cases there is a family history of high cholesterol, heart disease and or stroke. Unfortunately, lifestyle changes have little impact and medication is usually required.

How to reduce your cholesterol:

- **Changing your lifestyle** - If any of these lifestyle factors apply to you then please try to address them to see if they improve your cholesterol.
 - Reduce how much cholesterol you are putting into your body
 - Increase your HDL cholesterol by increasing cardiovascular exercise. Aim for at 150 minutes of exercise a week. This could be five 30 minute walks.
 - Lose any excess weight, reduce alcohol intake and stop smoking.

We usually repeat cholesterol blood tests in 3-6 months to see if there has been an improvement.

- **Medication** – We have very effective medications called Statins which can reduce cholesterol and therefore reduce the risk of heart attacks or strokes. We generally use these if people have extremely high cholesterol, if we feel the cause is likely a genetic problem, if lifestyle changes have not helped to reduce cholesterol and if patients are at high risk of



heart attacks or strokes. These risk factors include increasing age, strong family history of heart problems under the age of 50, being overweight, having other problems as well such as raised blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes. We usually base this on a calculation called Qrisk which looks at all these factors.