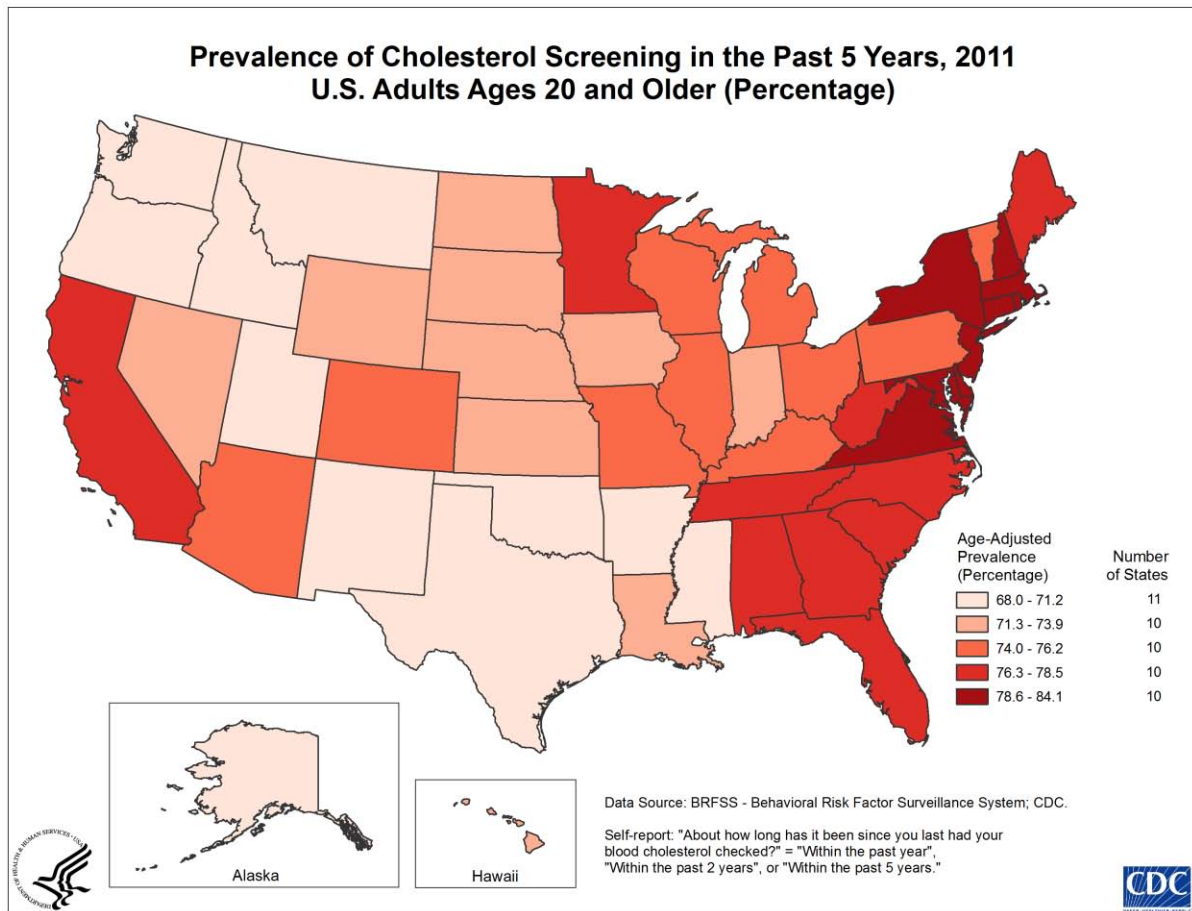


Cholesterol Fact Sheet



Cholesterol Facts

- Having high blood cholesterol puts you at risk of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.
- People with high cholesterol have about **twice the risk** of heart disease as people with lower levels.
- Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance. Your body needs some cholesterol, but it can build up on the walls of your arteries and lead to heart disease and stroke when you have too much in your blood.
- **71 million American adults (33.5%)** have high low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad," cholesterol.¹

- Only **1 out of every 3** adults with high LDL cholesterol has the condition under control.¹
- **Less than half** of adults with high LDL cholesterol get treatment.¹
- Lowering your cholesterol can reduce your risk of having a heart attack, needing heart bypass surgery or angioplasty, and dying of heart disease.
- Exercising, eating a healthy diet, and not smoking will help you prevent high cholesterol and reduce your levels.
- High cholesterol has no symptoms, so many people don't know that their cholesterol is too high. Your doctor can do a simple blood test to check your levels. The National Cholesterol Education Program recommends that adults get their cholesterol checked every five years.

Desirable Cholesterol Levels ²	
Total cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL
LDL ("bad" cholesterol)	Less than 100 mg/dL
HDL ("good" cholesterol)	60 mg/dL or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL

CDC's Public Health Efforts

Million Hearts[™]

Million Hearts[™] is a national, public-private initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. Co-led by CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the initiative brings together communities, health care professionals, health systems, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, and private-sector partners to improve care and empower Americans to make heart-healthy choices.

CDC's National Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program

Since 1998, CDC has funded state health departments' efforts to reduce the number of people with heart disease or stroke. Health departments in 41 states and the District of Columbia currently receive funding. The program stresses policy and education to promote heart-healthy and stroke-free living and working conditions.

WISEWOMAN

CDC funds 21 WISEWOMAN projects in 19 states and two tribal organizations. WISEWOMAN helps women with little or no health insurance reduce their risk for heart disease, stroke, and other chronic diseases. The program assists women age 40 to 64 in improving their diet, physical activity, and other behaviors. WISEWOMAN also provides cholesterol tests and other screening.

For More Information

For more information about cholesterol, visit the following Web sites:

- [American Heart Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)
- [Third Report of the Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults \(Adult Treatment Panel III\)](#)
- [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS\)](#)

To learn more about Americans' cholesterol levels, see [*Health, United States*](#), an annual report from CDC.

References

1. CDC. [Vital signs: prevalence, treatment, and control of high levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol](#). United States, 1999–2002 and 2005–2008. *MMWR*. 2011;60(4):109–14.
2. National Cholesterol Education Program. [Third Report of the National Cholesterol Education Program Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults](#). NIH Publication No. 01-3670. Bethesda, MD. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. 2001.