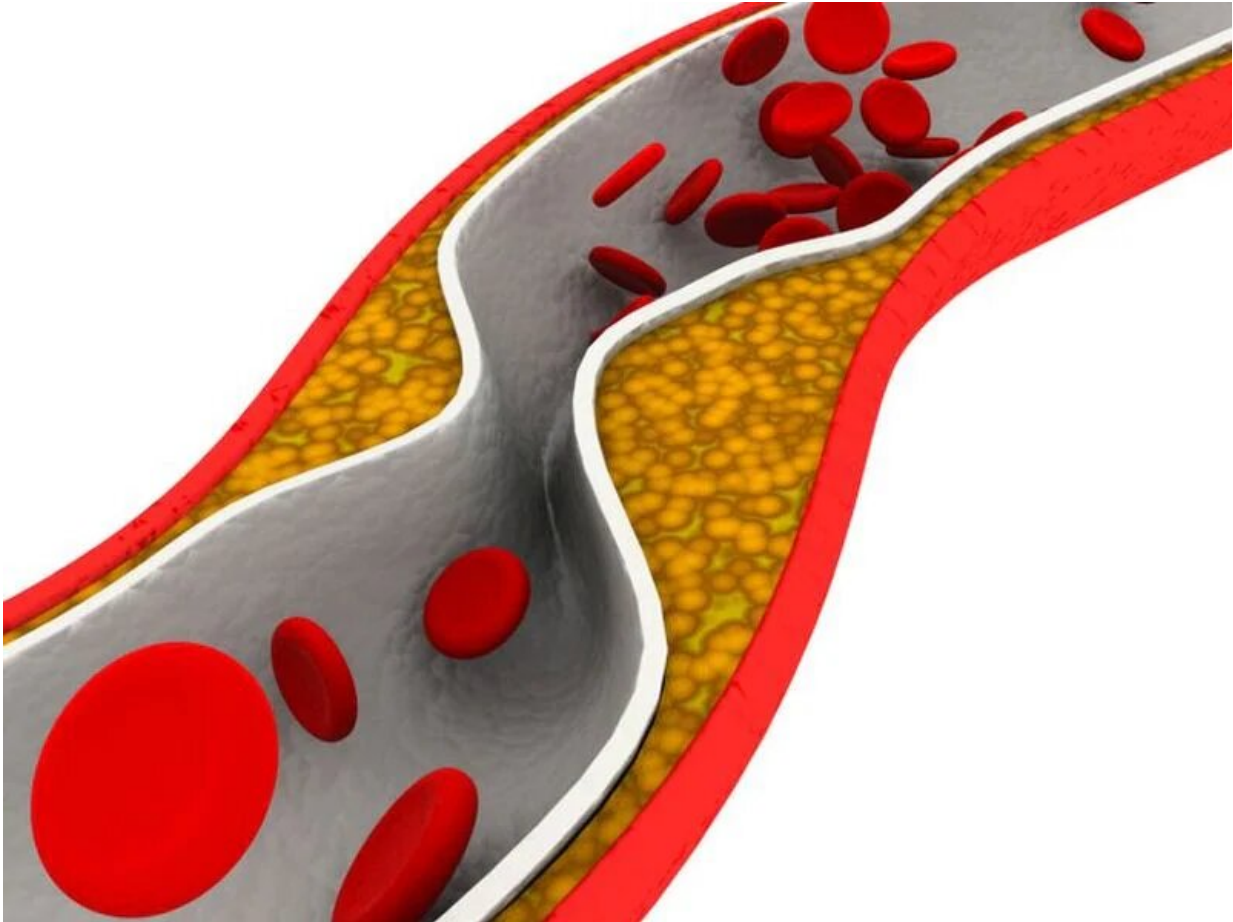


Fewer Americans have high cholesterol

April 22 2020, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—The number of American adults with high cholesterol dropped nearly 8 percentage points from 2000 to 2018, health officials reported Wednesday.

By 2018, just over 11%#37; of adults age 20 and over had [high cholesterol](#), a major cause of heart disease, according to a new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The Healthy People 2020 Guidelines has established a goal of lowering the percent of adults with high total cholesterol to no more than nearly 14%. Apart from adults 40 to 59 years, this goal has been met," said lead researcher Margaret Carroll, a statistician at CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

The overall finding was similar for men, women, whites, blacks, Asians and Hispanics, the researchers found.

Moreover, the percentage of those who have lower amounts of so-called [good cholesterol](#) (HDL-C) has dropped—from 22% in 2007-2008 to 16% during 2017-2018; CDC researchers said in a report published April 22.

Although this is all good news, it's not time to sit on the couch and break out a bag of chips.

Many heart attacks and strokes still occur unnecessarily, said Dr. Gregg Fonarow, director of the Ahmanson-University of California, Los Angeles Cardiomyopathy Center

Most of the improvements in [cholesterol levels](#) occurred up to 2013; little improvement has been made since, noted Fonarow.

Other reports have shown that much of the decline in total cholesterol levels reflect an increase in use of cholesterol-lowering statin medications, he said.

Declines in heart attacks and stroke have occurred in this time frame,

Fonarow said. "However, those gains have stalled in recent years, just as the declines in total cholesterol seemed to stall," he said.

Many men and women still have heart attacks and strokes that could have been avoided, Fonarow said. How? With "improved awareness, treatment and optimization of cholesterol levels with statin medications along with heart-healthy lifestyle modification."

Also, Fonarow believes the definition of high cholesterol used in the report, greater or equal to 240 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL), does not fully capture cholesterol's contribution to the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"The vast majority of first and recurrent cardiovascular events occur in men and women with total cholesterol below 240 mg/dL. Statin and other cholesterol-lowering therapy can lower the risk of events in individuals with levels well below 240 mg/dL," Fonarow added.

For the study, researchers used data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Among the other findings:

- More people in their 40s and 50s had higher total cholesterol (about 16%) than people 20 to 39 (less than 8%) and 60 and over (about 11%).
- Looking at levels of good cholesterol—where higher is better—researchers found worse results among middle-aged and younger adults.
- Also, nearly 27% of men 20 and older had lower levels of good [cholesterol](#)—more than three times the rate for women.
- Among whites, blacks, Asians and Hispanics, blacks had the

lowest levels of low HDL-C overall. The highest percentages of low HDL-C were among Hispanic men and women, the researchers found.

More information: For more on high cholesterol, see the [American Heart Association](#).

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