



Nutrition Tidbit: **High Cholesterol Levels in Children.**

Atherosclerosis (plaques forming on the inner walls of blood vessels) is a life long process that has been proven to begin in childhood and continue throughout a person's life. In addition, there is strong evidence that this disease runs in families and your child is at higher risk of developing high cholesterol if other family member also have high cholesterol or heart disease.

What are the signs and symptoms of high cholesterol in children?

Thankfully it takes years for plaques to be large enough to cause problems like heart attacks. However, if we can prevent the plaques from starting in childhood, we can impact the child's entire life.

How is high cholesterol in children diagnosed?

A blood test is done when your child is between 9 and 11 years old and again between 17-21.

How is high cholesterol in children treated?

Life style changes are the primary goal for treatment in children. Medications are reserved for significantly elevated levels that do not respond to lifestyle changes.

Ways to help keep your family's cholesterol at healthy levels:

- Know your own cholesterol level — and if it's high, ask to have your kids' levels checked.
- Serve a diet rich in fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Limit commercially prepared baked goods and serve healthy snacks such as fresh fruit, vegetables with low-fat dip, lite popcorn, and low-fat yogurt.
- Choose from a variety of protein foods, including lean meats and poultry, fish, nuts, beans, peas, and soy products.
- Limit beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Dietary cholesterol should be no more than 200-300 mg per day.
- Keep dietary fat intake between 30%-40% for kids 1-3 years old and between 25%-35% for kids 4-18 years old, with most fats coming from sources of unsaturated fats (such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils). An average child should take in about 1,500 to 2,400 calories per day, depending on age and activity level, which would be about 50 to 80 grams of total fat per day.