

Why Should I Have My Child's Cholesterol Checked?

All children should have cholesterol checked between the ages of 9-11, and again between the ages of 17-21.

Children with risk factors listed below for early heart disease may need it checked before the age of 9:

- Family history of early heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Overweight
- Tobacco user
- Have diabetes, kidney disease, or arthritis

Reasons to Check Cholesterol

- It is a test that we do to make sure your child is healthy.
- Heart disease is a “silent” disease. Symptoms like chest pain, heart attack, and stroke don’t show up until very late in the disease when the arteries are blocked or nearly blocked.
- Heart disease can start in childhood. Small changes made early have the biggest effect on your child’s health as an adult.
- Children can have high cholesterol even if heart disease doesn’t run in the family.
- If we can slow or reverse build-up of cholesterol in the arteries, we may be able to prevent heart disease as an adult.

How is cholesterol checked?

It is checked by a blood test. We suggest you do this at the end of your child’s clinic visit. If your child has eaten before the visit, we do a total cholesterol and HDL blood test. If the results aren’t in the normal range, the next step is a fasting (nothing to eat or drink except water for 12 hours) blood test to look at which levels aren’t normal.

What happens if the cholesterol isn’t normal?

If the numbers aren’t normal, your child’s doctor will talk with you. If the numbers are just outside the normal range, your child should be active every day and eat a healthy diet.

If the numbers are well outside the normal range, we may suggest you visit the Pediatric Preventive Cardiology Clinic (PPCC). PPCC reviews your child’s test results and makes a plan with you and your child to improve heart health.

Sometimes you and your child need to meet with a dietitian to talk about ways to eat healthy meals and snacks.

A small number of children have very high cholesterol. If being active and eating healthy doesn’t improve the numbers, your child may need medicine.

Please talk with your child’s doctor if you have questions about this screening.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#7921.