



# Living Well North Tyneside

Supporting Health and Wellbeing

**National Cholesterol Month** takes place every October, dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of high cholesterol and supporting the life-saving work of HEART UK, the cholesterol charity. The campaign encourages individuals to take control of their cholesterol levels and promotes healthier lifestyles to prevent cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes.

## What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in your blood. While your body needs cholesterol to function, too much of it can lead to serious health problems. There are two types of cholesterol:

1. **Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL)** – Often referred to as "bad" cholesterol, too much LDL in your blood can lead to a build-up in the arteries, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.
2. **High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL)** – Known as "good" cholesterol, HDL helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream, protecting against heart disease.

High cholesterol often has no symptoms, which is why it's important to get your levels checked regularly. Left untreated, high cholesterol can lead to the narrowing of the arteries, also known as atherosclerosis, which can cause heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular conditions.

## The Goals of National Cholesterol Month

Organised by HEART UK, National Cholesterol Month aims to raise funds for the charity's vital work and educate the public on the importance of managing cholesterol levels. HEART UK provides support for individuals and families affected by high cholesterol and offers guidance on making lifestyle changes that reduce risk factors.

Throughout October, the campaign encourages people to:

- **Get Their Cholesterol Checked** – Many people are unaware of their cholesterol levels, so regular testing is essential. You can ask your GP for a cholesterol test or even use a home testing kit.
- **Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices** – A healthy diet and regular exercise are key to managing cholesterol. HEART UK promotes heart-healthy eating, such as reducing saturated fat, increasing fibre intake, and incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains into your diet.
- **Raise Funds** – National Cholesterol Month also acts as a fundraiser to support HEART UK's services. People are encouraged to take on challenges like sponsored walks, runs, or bake sales to raise money and spread awareness.

## Tips for Lowering Cholesterol

Managing your cholesterol can significantly lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. Here are some practical tips to help:

1. **Eat a Balanced Diet** – Focus on foods high in unsaturated fats, like oily fish (such as salmon), nuts, seeds, and avocados. Avoid foods high in saturated fats, such as fatty cuts of meat, full-fat dairy, and processed foods like cakes and biscuits.
2. **Increase Fibre Intake** – Fibre-rich foods like oats, beans, lentils, fruits, and vegetables help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol by preventing its absorption into the bloodstream.
3. **Exercise Regularly** – Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week, such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming. Physical activity can help increase HDL (good) cholesterol while lowering LDL cholesterol.
4. **Quit Smoking** – Smoking damages blood vessels and lowers HDL cholesterol. Quitting smoking can improve heart health and overall well-being.
5. **Limit Alcohol Intake** – Excessive alcohol can raise cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Keep within the recommended limits: no more than 14 units of alcohol per week for both men and women.

## Raising Funds for HEART UK

In addition to raising awareness, National Cholesterol Month encourages individuals and groups to raise funds for HEART UK, supporting the charity's work in providing cholesterol management advice, patient support, and funding research.

Popular fundraising activities include:

- **Sponsored Challenges** – Participants can take on physical challenges like sponsored walks, runs, or cycle rides. Many choose to take part in local marathons or fitness events while raising money for HEART UK.
- **Bake Sales and Coffee Mornings** – A fun and social way to raise money, while also offering the chance to share information about cholesterol and heart health.
- **Cholesterol Check Events** – Many organisations host cholesterol screening events to encourage people to get tested and donate to HEART UK at the same time.

## Support and Resources from HEART UK

HEART UK offers a wide range of resources to help people manage their cholesterol and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle. Some of the services they provide include:

- **Helpline** – A confidential helpline staffed by experts, offering advice on cholesterol management, medication, and lifestyle changes.
- **Online Resources** – HEART UK's website offers a wealth of information on cholesterol, including heart-healthy recipes, exercise tips, and guides to understanding cholesterol medications.
- **Support Groups** – HEART UK hosts local and online support groups for individuals and families affected by high cholesterol. These groups provide a space to share experiences and get advice from healthcare professionals.

## Join the Fight Against High Cholesterol

This October, take the opportunity to check your cholesterol, make heart-healthy lifestyle changes, and support HEART UK in their mission to prevent heart disease and strokes. By getting involved in National Cholesterol Month, you can help spread awareness and raise crucial funds for the ongoing fight against cardiovascular diseases.

## Related Links

- [For more information on National Cholesterol Month and how to get involved, visit HEART UK's website](#)

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