High cholesterol doesn’t make you feel sick. But if it builds up in your arteries, it can block blood flow to your heart or brain and cause a heart attack or stroke.

There are two kinds of cholesterol. “Bad cholesterol,” also known as LDL, is mostly fat. It can clog your arteries, which increases your risk of heart problems. Your LDL reading should be less than 100; a reading of 160 or above is considered to be high. If you have high cholesterol, your doctor will want you to lower your LDL.

HDL, or “good cholesterol,” helps to clear the bad cholesterol from your blood.

A high level of HDL can help protect you from a heart attack. Your HDL should be more than 40. HDL over 60 protects you from heart attack. HDL below 40 increases your risk of heart problems.

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver and found in certain foods, like dairy products, eggs and meat. Our bodies need only a small amount of cholesterol to function properly.

Here are ranges for your total cholesterol reading:

- Best is less than 200.
- Borderline high is 200-239. Even borderline high makes you more likely to have a heart attack.
- High is 240 or above.

Many things can cause high cholesterol, including eating a diet high in saturated fat or cholesterol, being overweight, and not exercising enough. Family history can also play a part. To treat your high cholesterol, your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes (including quitting smoking) and/or may prescribe cholesterol-lowering medication. Monitoring your cholesterol is good for your future health.

CONRAD’S NUMBERS SHOW...

Conrad recently participated in a health screening on campus. He learned that his total cholesterol is 265, which puts him in the “high” range. Conrad immediately scheduled a follow-up exam with his doctor, who conducted a more complete test to confirm his reading. Conrad’s doctor told him that he needs to make some lifestyle changes, beginning with his eating habits. Cutting back on fried foods is one way for Conrad to lower his cholesterol, and it’s a good place to start.

...FRIED CHICKEN IS NOT THE WAY TO GO