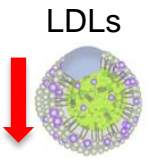
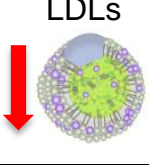
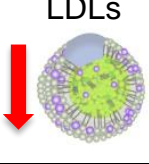
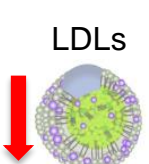
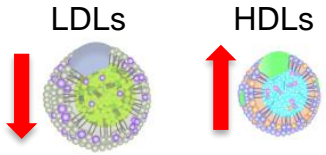
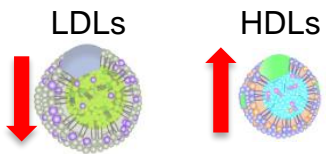
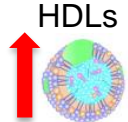
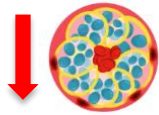




Tool: Safeguarding Your Arteries

Atherosclerosis is a dangerous condition that everyone should hope to avoid. Science provides a number of strategies that can prevent, delay, or reduce the severity of existing atherosclerosis. Above all, eating a balance of foods that are as close to their natural state as possible is a strong first step toward retaining the health of your arteries. Other strategies are summarized in the below chart.*

Lifestyle Choice	What it Does	
Low-fat, plant-based diet		Eating a diet with reduced saturated fat works to reduce LDL particles in the bloodstream because unsaturated fats sensitize apoprotein receptors in the liver, making the liver more efficient at pulling LDLs from the blood. The most effective diets keep fat consumption to <20% of calories .
Low-cholesterol diet		Because LDLs are partially composed of cholesterol, reducing cholesterol intake allows for the creation of less LDL particles.
Minimizing caloric intake		The less calories you consume, the less VLDL particles will need to be created to transport fat—and the less LDL particles will result. One straightforward way to lower the caloric concentration of the food you eat is to fill your diet with whole, unprocessed foods .
Stress management		When you are stressed, triglycerides stored in your adipose tissue will begin to break down and get dumped into the bloodstream as fatty acids. Your liver will then repackage them as VLDLs to return them to the adipose tissue. Practicing relaxation will prevent this process from occurring and help to minimize the number of LDLs eventually created from VLDLs.

Lifestyle Choice	What it Does	
Quitting smoking		<p>The chemicals in cigarettes cause the creation of more LDLs and decrease your HDL population. Quitting will allow the healthier HDL particle to multiply and reduce the LDL content in your blood.</p>
Exercise		<p>During exercise, triglycerides stored in your adipose tissue will begin to break down and get dumped into the bloodstream as fatty acids. Your muscles will then use these fatty acids, avoiding the need for new VLDLs to be created to carry them. Exercise also increases the liver's production of HDL particles and decreases insulin and blood pressure, which can both accelerate atherosclerosis. The healthiest course of action is to incorporate moderate exercise in to your routine 5–7 days per week.</p>
Alcohol		<p>Small amounts of alcohol, about 1 oz per day, can cause the liver to increase production of HDLs.</p>
Anticoagulants		<p>Anticoagulants like foods with high omega-3 fatty acids (e.g. fish) or a low dose of aspirin work to dilate blood vessels, inhibit blood clotting, and reduce inflammation, all of which play an important role in reducing the dangers of atherosclerosis.</p>
Antioxidants		<p>When foam cells become oxidized, they become rigid and reduce the ability of arteries to dilate and contract. Antioxidants can work to prevent this oxidation and preserve the flexibility of arteries.</p>

Lifestyle Choice	What it Does	
Psychosocial Support System		Having a network of medical, social, and familial support will help you both understand what dietary and lifestyle changes are right for you, and aid your ability to follow through on them.

**Be sure to consult with your physician about which steps may be right for you before incorporating any of them into your own routine.*