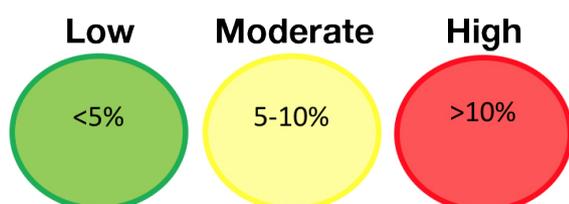


Cholesterol, heart attacks & strokes, how to reduce the risk

Many people suffer heart attacks and strokes every year. Some of them have cardiovascular risk factors that predispose them. **Cholesterol** is one of these risk factors, but it isn't the only one.

What are the other known risk factors? The most important ones are age, sex, smoking, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Does everybody have the same cardiovascular risk? No, it is not the same for everybody. People that have previously had a heart attack or stroke are considered to be at very high risk. **In other cases**, if total cholesterol level is over 200 mg/dl, the doctor will evaluate the individual cardiovascular risk. Above all, he or she will consider the levels of total cholesterol, of HDLc (“good cholesterol”) and LDLc (“bad cholesterol”) and the other risk factors mentioned above. Using risk tables adapted to the Catalan population (Framingham-REGICOR tables), the doctor will estimate the risk of suffering a heart event during the next 10 years. The risk may be *low*, *moderate* or *high*.

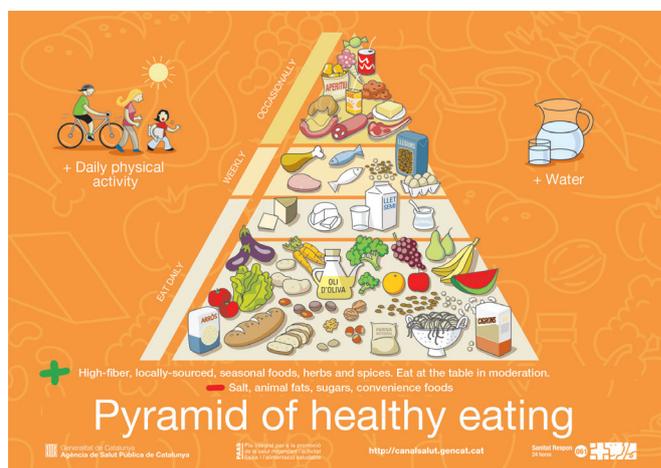


How can you reduce the risk of having a heart attack or stroke? By giving up smoking, eating healthily, doing physical exercise and taking medication when necessary. These lifestyle changes will improve your health and reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke by up to 30%.



Which medicines are effective and may be necessary? Medication for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol and platelet

antiaggregants (like aspirin) or anticoagulant medicines.



What about the treatment to reduce cholesterol? This is taken by a lot of patients that have had a heart attack or stroke. If you haven't had a heart attack or stroke, the treatment will be prescribed in accordance with your heart risk and if changes in diet and exercise have not helped. **Statins** are the most frequently used treatment. They reduce the risk by 25-35%.

Side effects of statins. These medicines are usually well tolerated. In some cases, they may cause muscle aches, weakness or digestive disorders. These effects are generally minor and temporary. **Remember** that all medicines can cause side effects.

Consult your doctor if you have any doubts and go to the surgery if you don't feel well.