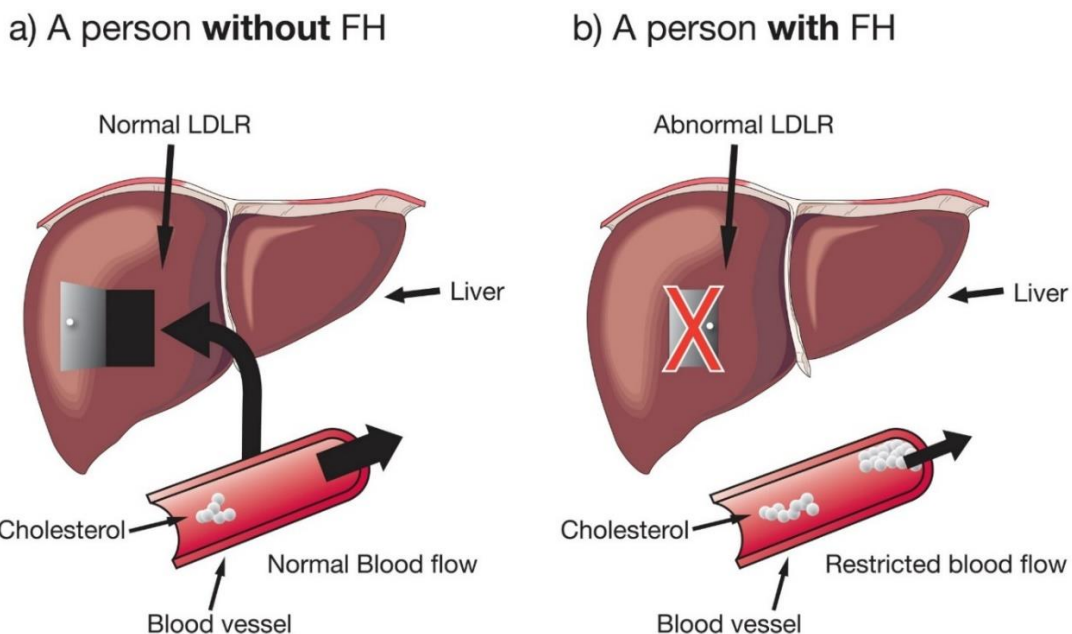


Familial Hypercholesterolaemia

What is FH?

Having familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH) means your body is unable to effectively remove cholesterol from the bloodstream, leading to higher levels. Cholesterol is made in the body and is carried in the blood. You also get it from some of the foods you eat.

There are 2 types of cholesterol: HDL: good cholesterol and LDL: bad cholesterol. Your body needs both, but too much bad cholesterol can stick inside your blood vessels and may lead to heart problems when you get older. With FH, LDL receptor doors (LDLR) in the liver (which normally clear bad cholesterol from the body) are abnormal and don't open, so over time can lead to plaque build-up in the coronary arteries.



How common is FH?

FH is common. 1 in every 250 people in the general population have FH. There are more than 10,000 people with FH in Western Australia (WA) and more than 2000 children are affected. In WA, a child is born with FH every 2-3 days.

How do you get FH?

You are born with FH. It is a genetic condition which means it is passed down through families. You inherit FH from one or both of your parents.



How is FH diagnosed?

FH is easy to diagnose and identifying it at a young age is really important. Treatment is more effective when started early, before high levels of cholesterol can cause damage to your blood vessels. A blood test will show your levels of good and bad cholesterol.

Why is treating high LDL cholesterol so important?

Untreated FH can lead to early heart disease with an average life expectancy up to 20 years less than the general population. If FH is diagnosed and treated early, the risk of heart disease can be greatly reduced.

Children with FH who maintain a healthy lifestyle and take medicine to lower their levels of bad cholesterol from an early age, are less likely to develop heart disease associated with FH and can expect to have a normal life expectancy.

Management

Keeping active and eating healthily are very important when you have FH, but for most people this is not enough to reduce the bad cholesterol level and it is likely you will need to take medicine. Statins are the most common type of medicine prescribed for children with FH who have high levels of LDL cholesterol and are [recommended from 8-10 years of age](#). Statins help your body filter cholesterol out of your blood and are very effective at lowering bad cholesterol. Statins are [very safe and well tolerated in children with FH](#) and should be taken once every day.

Following a healthy lifestyle is encouraged from an early age and will help to reduce other heart disease risk factors. A healthy lifestyle includes:

- [Eating a healthy diet](#) low in saturated and trans-fat and with or without plant sterols.
- Getting regular exercise. Exercise helps raise levels of good cholesterol.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Not vaping or smoking.
- Avoiding alcohol.

It is recommended that all young women who have had their first menstrual period and are taking a statin should consider contraception. Statins should be discontinued prior to conceiving and during any pregnancies.

Please refer to the [FH Australia](#) website for more detailed information.

The FH Team at Perth Children's Hospital can be contacted at PCH.FH@health.wa.gov.au



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service



Child and Adolescent Health Service
15 Hospital Avenue, Nedlands, WA, 6009.
Telephone: (08) 6456 2222
Produced by: Department of General Paediatrics,
Familial Hypercholesterolaemia
Ref: 730 © CAHS 2024

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