

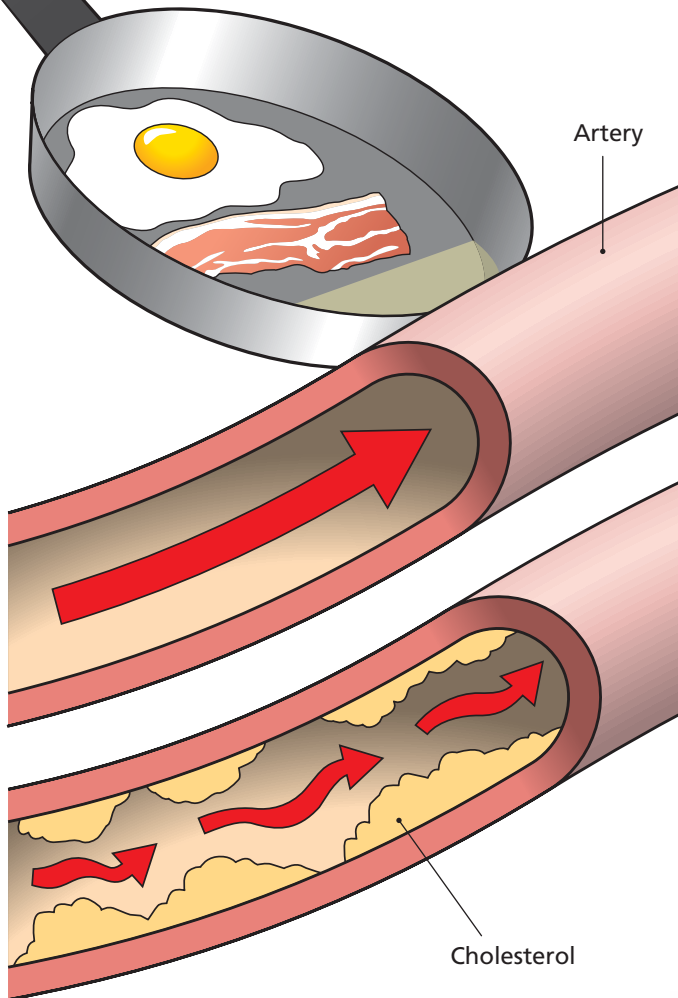


# Too much fat and salt

The body will make use of what it is given. But if it is given too much of some food, ill health can result.

As with all animals, human bodies have a built-in ability to make the most of what is available – to protect the body against times when there is not enough. This is why the body stores up essential materials that give us energy.

▼ (Picture 1) Animal foods like bacon and egg contain cholesterol. If there is too much cholesterol in the blood it may settle out on the artery walls. This obstructs the flow of blood and may lead to blood clots and even heart attacks.



## Too much fat

If we cannot immediately make use of all of the energy in the food we eat, our bodies begin to store it away in the most concentrated and efficient form possible – as fat.

## Cholesterol

**CHOLESTEROL** is a waxy, fat-like substance which is made in the liver and carried around in the blood. It is vital in small amounts. All animals make cholesterol, and it is concentrated in their fat. So, when we eat animal fat we also take in extra cholesterol – sometimes more than the body needs.

Sometimes, if the level of cholesterol is too high, some of the surplus cholesterol settles out and sticks to the walls of the blood vessels, leaving less room for the blood to flow (Picture 1). This is the main cause of heart disease.

When the arteries are narrowed, the heart has to push with greater force (one of the causes of high **BLOOD PRESSURE**). In some cases, the waxy coating may break up and pieces may block the blood vessels, stopping the flow of blood. The result may be a heart attack. If the blood supply to the brain is blocked, it is called a stroke.

## Salt

Salt (Pictures 2 and 3) is a mineral found in many foods. It is extremely important for the proper working of muscles, and for getting nourishment into the blood. You would die without salt, but too much salt can also lead to high blood pressure and heart disease.

## Preventing heart disease

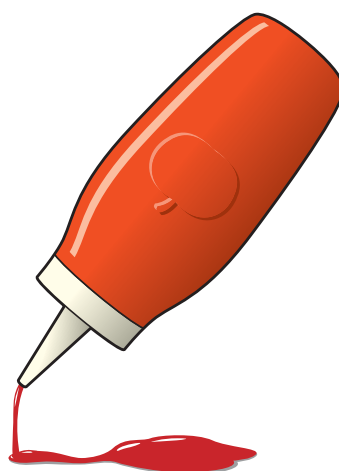
The threat of heart disease can be lessened by exercise. This helps the body use up more cholesterol. Eating a balanced **DIET** that does not contain too much animal fat or salt can also reduce the chance of heart disease. (However, the most important way of reducing the risk of heart disease is not to smoke.)

There are lots of easy ways to eat less animal fats, for example, by eating only the lean parts of meat, not the fatty parts, keeping down the amount of cream, butter and cheese you eat, and draining off the fat after cooking instead of adding it to gravy.

It is not necessary to cut out all animal fats or salt to stay healthy, just to keep the amount down.



◀ (Picture 2) The Romans knew how vital salt was. A lot of salt is lost through sweat, when we are hot or doing hard work. Roman soldiers worked hard and would get very tired or ill without extra salt. So instead of money they were often paid in salt – or *salarium* as they called it. *Salarium* is the origin of the word salary we use today. Many of us are not as active as Roman soldiers would have been and so we need less salt.



◀ (Picture 3) Salt is a very good and cheap preservative and so it is used in food that needs to keep for a while. However, fast food, such as a small pre-prepared pizza, may contain more than an entire day's supply of salt. Sauces also contain a lot of salt (see page 13).



### Summary

- Heart disease is often caused by increased blood pressure.
- Too much cholesterol and salt can cause high blood pressure.
- Eating sensibly can keep blood pressure under control.