

# Cholesterol

## DESCRIPTION

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that is found in all cells of the body. It is used in the body to make hormones, vitamin D, and substances that aid in digestion. The human body makes all the cholesterol it needs, but diet also contributes to cholesterol. High blood cholesterol is a condition in which there is too much cholesterol in the blood. By itself, the condition usually has no signs or symptoms. Thus, many people don't know that their cholesterol levels are too high. People who have high blood cholesterol are at higher risk for heart disease and stroke.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW ARE WE DOING

Nationally, about one in three American adults has high cholesterol. In Minnesota, about 28.1 percent of residents have high cholesterol. In 2014, 29 percent of Ramsey County adults surveyed had been diagnosed with high cholesterol at some point in their lives. This is 15.5 percentage points above the national goal of 13.5 percent.<sup>2</sup> The aging process slows the ability of the blood to clear cholesterol from the blood, so cholesterol levels tend to increase with age. Among respondents in the six-county metro area, the age group of 65 to 75 years had the highest rate of high cholesterol diagnoses at 54 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020: Reduce the proportion of adults aged 20 years and older with total blood cholesterol levels of 240 mg/dL or greater.

U.S. Target: 13.5 percent of adults.<sup>4</sup>

## DISPARITIES

Nationally, higher rates of high cholesterol are seen among Hispanic males and non-Hispanic white women.<sup>5</sup> Populations with lower education have higher rates of high cholesterol. Among the Metro population residents surveyed, 40 percent of those having a high school education had a diagnosis of high blood pressure compared to 27 percent of those with a bachelor's degree.<sup>6</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

People with a family history of high cholesterol are at increased risk for the condition. Factors that can help keep cholesterol levels in a healthy range include a healthy diet, active lifestyle, not smoking and limiting alcohol.

## WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY IS DOING

Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health provides data monitoring and reporting for this topic in order to better understand the overall health and current conditions in the community. The information may help inform community partners, policy makers or county program leadership.

## Information to note

- The highest rates of hypertension are found in people 65 - 75 years old.
- There's a 13 percentage point education disparity gap for high cholesterol, with higher rates among those having high school education compared to those having a bachelor's degree.

<sup>1</sup>What is Cholesterol? National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Web site. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc/>. Accessed January 2018

<sup>2</sup>Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health. Metro SHAPE Ramsey County Data Book. 2014; <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed January 2018.

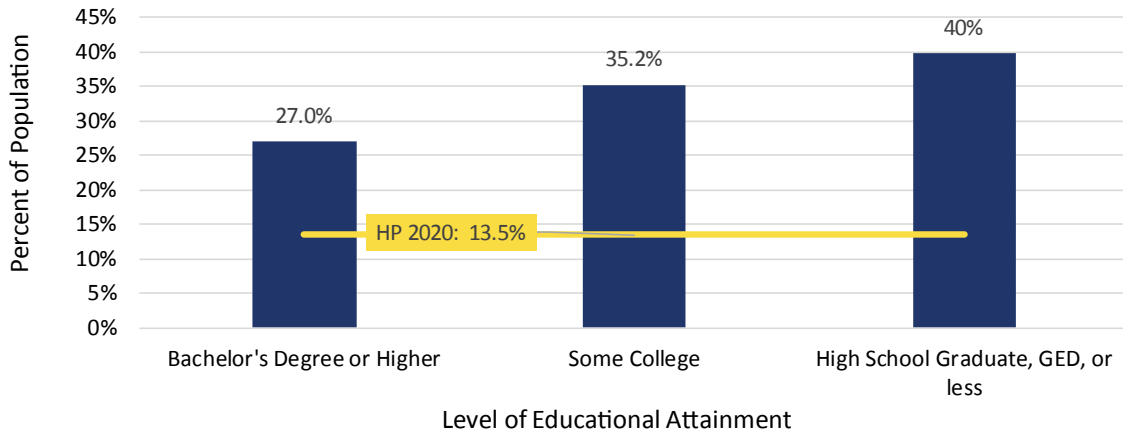
<sup>3</sup>Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book. 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed January 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy People 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives>. Accessed January 2018.

<sup>5</sup>Family History and Other Characteristics that Increase Risk for High Cholesterol. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/facts.htm>. Accessed January 2018.

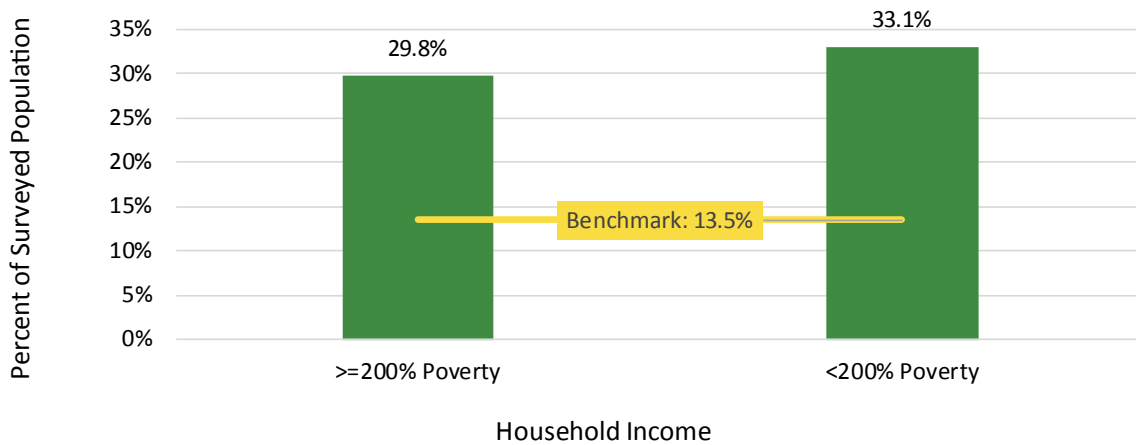
<sup>6</sup>Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book. 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed January 2018.

High Cholesterol Diagnosis, Six-County Metro, 2014



Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network.<sup>8</sup>

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Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book. 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed July 17, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed January 2018.