

# BRFSS Fact Sheet

# High Cholesterol



Tennessee  
Department of Health

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#### Definitions:

**Cholesterol:** A waxy, fat-like substance made by the body and found in some foods.

#### Borderline High Cholesterol:

200-239 mg/DL

#### High Cholesterol:

≥ 240 mg/DL

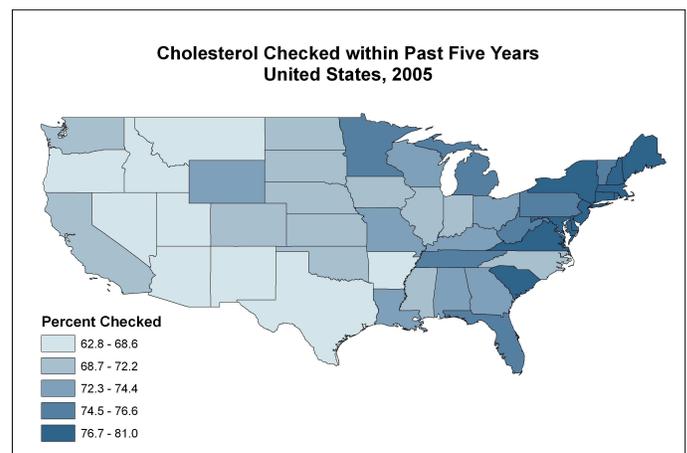
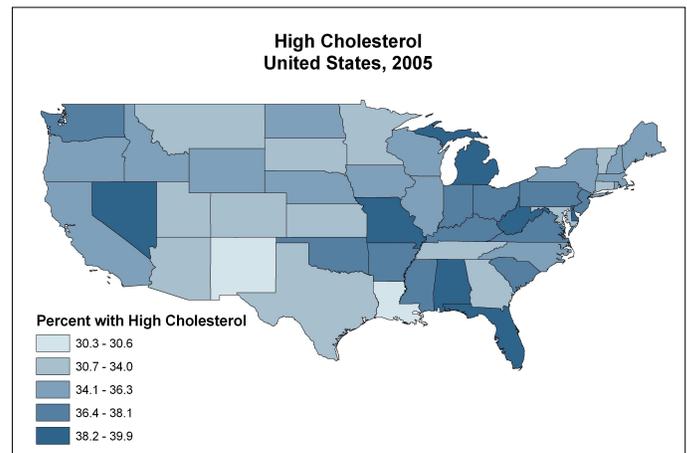
#### References:

- American Heart Association. *Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – 2006 Update*. Dallas, TX: AHA; 2006
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov))
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/brfss](http://www.cdc.gov/brfss))

Prepared by the Tennessee Department of Health; Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment; Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation section based on 2005 TN Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data.

Nearly 100 million American adults have borderline high cholesterol and 34.5 million have high cholesterol.<sup>1</sup> High blood cholesterol does not usually cause symptoms – many people are unaware that their levels are too high.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is a major risk factor for developing heart disease and having a heart attack.<sup>2</sup> Two of the Healthy People 2010 objectives are to increase the proportion of adults who have had their blood cholesterol checked within the past 5 years to 80% and to reduce the proportion of adults with high cholesterol to 17%.<sup>3</sup> Reducing risk factors for high cholesterol (obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and diet high in saturated fat and cholesterol) is important for reaching this second goal and for increasing the quality and years of healthy life for all Tennesseans.

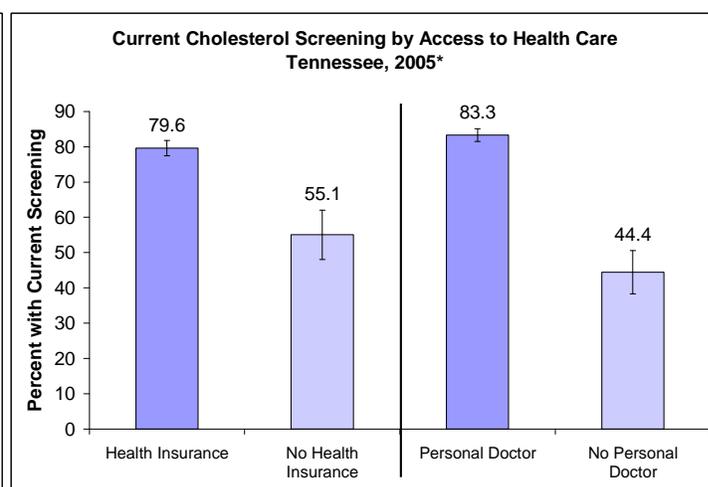
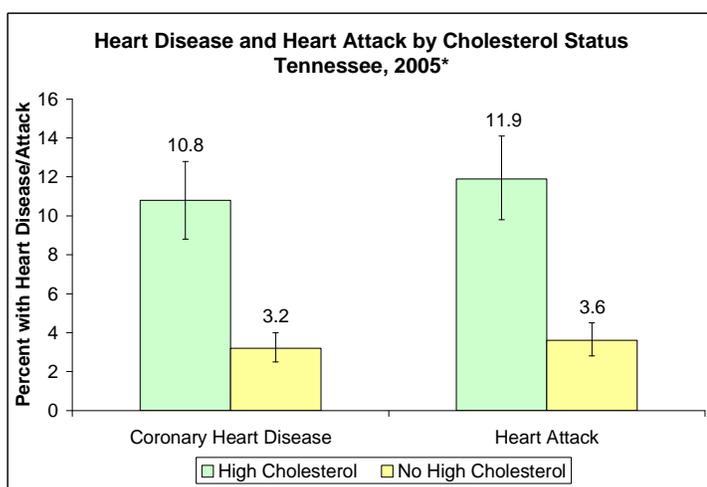
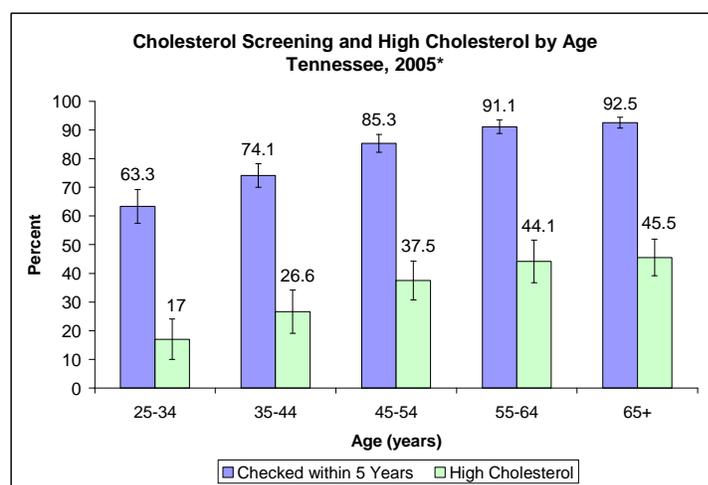
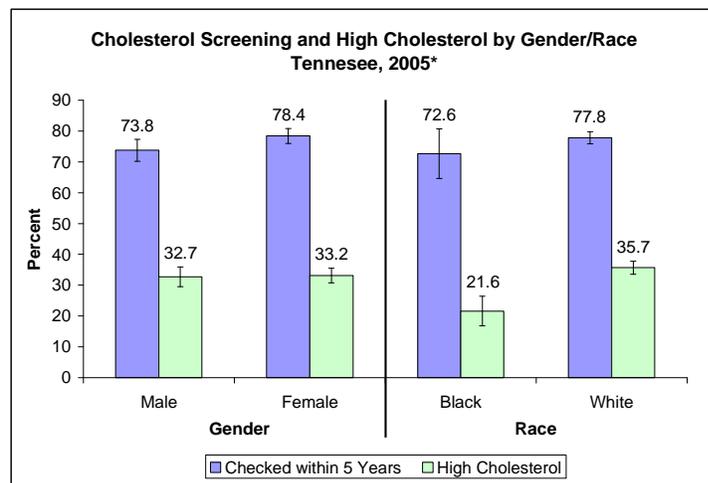
- In 2005, 32.9% of adult Tennesseans reported that they had been told by a health care provider that they have high blood cholesterol, compared to 35.6% for the United States.<sup>4</sup> Among all 50 states the percentage of adults with high cholesterol ranged from 30.3% in Louisiana to 39.9% in West Virginia.<sup>4</sup>
- 76.1% of adult Tennesseans reported having a current cholesterol screening (i.e. their cholesterol was checked within the past 5 years), compared to 73.0% for the United States.<sup>4</sup> Among all 50 states the percentage of adults with a current screening ranged from 62.8% in Utah to 81.0% in New Hampshire.<sup>4</sup>
- From 1995-2005, the percentage of adult Tennesseans with high cholesterol increased from 26.8% ( $\pm$  2.2) to 32.9% ( $\pm$  2.0). The percentage with a current cholesterol screening did not increase substantially between 1999 and 2005.
- A slightly higher percentage of females (78.4%) than males (73.8%) had a current cholesterol screening. However, the percentage with high cholesterol was similar for both genders (33.2% vs. 32.7%, respectively).
- Whites were more likely than blacks to have a current cholesterol screening (77.8% vs. 72.6%, respectively), and to have high cholesterol (35.7% vs. 21.6%, respectively).



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- Both the percentage of adults with a current screening and the percentage with high cholesterol increased with increasing age.
- As income and education levels increased, the percentage of adults with a current cholesterol screening increased and the percentage with high cholesterol decreased.
- A history of coronary heart disease or heart attack was over 2 times more common in persons with high cholesterol than in those without it.
- 35.3% ( $\pm 3.4$ ) of adults with high cholesterol were obese, compared to 24.5% ( $\pm 2.5$ ) of those without high cholesterol. Similarly, the percentage of persons who reported no physical activity or exercise in the past 30 days was higher in those with high cholesterol ( $40.6\% \pm 3.3$ ) than in those without it ( $28.2\% \pm 2.5$ ).
- Having a current cholesterol screening was more common in those persons with health insurance (79.6%) than those without it (55.1%). Similarly, those reporting that they had a personal doctor or health care provider (83.3%) were more likely to have a current screening than those without such a person (44.4%).



\*The number above each column indicates the percent value for that column. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, as do ranges for percentages given in the text.