

# Cholesterol Disposal as an Essential Metabolic Function

ABSURD HEALTH INSTITUTE · 03 · Hepatobiliary, cholesterol and endocrine physiology · 15 OCTOBER 2026

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## Abstract

Cholesterol is indispensable for cell membranes, myelin and steroid synthesis, yet excessive atherogenic lipoprotein exposure contributes to cardiovascular disease. This paper explores cholesterol clearance as an active physiologic process rather than a passive consequence of eating less fat. Its conceptual contribution is to connect synthesis, transport, recycling and excretion without romanticizing cholesterol as uniformly beneficial or uniformly harmful.

## The Clinical Question and Its Context

Human cells synthesize cholesterol through regulated pathways; lipoproteins carry it through plasma; hepatic uptake and biliary excretion help regulate whole-body balance. Conversion to bile acids is a major route of cholesterol disposal, while unmodified cholesterol also enters bile and intestinal contents. Transport proteins including ABCG5/8 and LDL receptors influence different steps. A failure of plasma LDL clearance has different consequences from failure to absorb fat, and a normal blood cholesterol test does not describe every tissue compartment.

## Proposed Biological or Explanatory Model

The framework separates three questions often confused in popular medicine: Is cholesterol supply adequate for tissue synthesis? Are circulating apoB particles elevated enough to create vascular risk? Does a particular inherited or acquired condition impair handling of sterols or bile acids? The answers can differ in the same person. Sitosterolemia and cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis illustrate uncommon failures at different points in the network.

## Mechanism-Specific Interpretation

Cholesterol balance exists at both cellular and whole-body levels. Cells regulate endogenous synthesis, uptake, storage and efflux, while the liver integrates lipoprotein metabolism with bile-acid production and biliary sterol secretion. It is possible for a person to have adequate intracellular cholesterol for essential functions and still carry an excessive number of atherogenic apoB particles. This apparent paradox disappears once function and location are separated. The cholesterol inside a neural membrane is not the same causal quantity as the cholesterol circulating inside an LDL particle that may be retained in an arterial wall.

## Competing Explanations and Limits of Inference

The suggestion that high LDL is simply a marker of failed bile elimination would ignore substantial causal and therapeutic evidence concerning apoB-containing particles. Likewise, lowering serum cholesterol does not necessarily diagnose or repair a specific hepatic clearance defect. Mechanistic diagrams should not turn complex metabolic control into a single “outflow obstruction” narrative.

## Discriminating Observations and Evidence Thresholds

Natural experiments strengthen the framework precisely because they show different outcomes from different pathway defects. ABCG5/8 abnormalities highlight intestinal and biliary sterol movement; CYP27A1 deficiency changes bile-acid synthesis and cholestanol metabolism. A grand theory that cannot distinguish these conditions has sacrificed explanatory precision for breadth. Their differences should become a central part of the paper.

## Implications for Interpretation and Future Inquiry

A strong public-facing conclusion is that effective medicine must consider both biological necessity and context-dependent harm. Cholesterol is neither poison nor unconditional medicine. Understanding it requires tracking where it is made, carried, used and removed—and respecting the clinical consequences of persistently elevated atherogenic particle burden.

## Selected Evidence and Further Reading

1. [Sitosterolemia: Twenty Years of Discovery of ABCG5 ABCG8](#)
2. [Bile acids: regulation of synthesis](#)
3. [Sitosterolemia: a review and update of pathophysiology, clinical spectrum, diagnosis, and management](#)

Source lineage: Stroke and cholesterol-clearance investigations

Editorial note: Conceptual scientific commentary; not an original clinical trial, systematic review, peer-reviewed publication, or medical advice. Hypotheses are not established treatment effects.