

Healthy Living Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2010

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 9



Health & Wellness Events

UPS Corporate Blood Drive

- September 23, 2010
- 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Training Room 4

Lipid Panel/Lipid Profile

A complete cholesterol test, also called a lipid panel, or lipid profile, is actually a group of blood tests that can measure the amount of cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. A cholesterol test can help determine your risk of atherosclerosis, the buildup of plaque in your arteries that can lead to narrowed or blocked arteries throughout your body. If your cholesterol levels are high, you probably would not have any signs or symptoms, so a cholesterol test is an important tool.

A complete cholesterol test also includes measurement of four types of fats (lipids) in your blood.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com

Women and Cholesterol

Pre-menopausal women are usually protected from the high LDL (bad) level of cholesterol, because the female hormone estrogen tends to raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Since cholesterol levels tend to increase as women age, post-menopausal women may find that even a heart-healthy diet and physical activity are not enough to keep cholesterol from rising. If you're approaching menopause, it's especially important to have your cholesterol checked and talk with your doctor about your options.

Source: www.americanheart.org

Cholesterol

Definition

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatlike substance that your body needs to function normally. Cholesterol is naturally present in the cell walls or membranes found in the body, including the brain, nerves, muscles, skin, liver, intestines, and heart. Your body uses cholesterol to produce hormones, vitamin D, and bile acids that help you digest fat. It takes only a small amount of cholesterol in the blood to meet these needs. If you have too much cholesterol in your bloodstream, the excess may be deposited in your arteries, including the coronary arteries, where it contributes to blockages that cause the signs and symptoms of heart disease.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Cholesterol Numbers

What Do Cholesterol Numbers Mean?

It's important to keep your cholesterol levels within healthy limits. If you have other risk factors for developing heart disease, you should be even more careful—especially with your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol level. Because LDL cholesterol is associated with heart disease, it is the major focus of cholesterol-lowering treatment.

Most people should aim for an LDL level below 130 mg/dl. If you have other risk factors for heart disease, your target LDL may be below 100 mg/dl. If you are at very high risk, you may need to aim for an LDL level below 70 mg/dl.

The Top Five Foods to Lower Your Numbers

- **Oatmeal and oat bran.** Oatmeal contains soluble fiber, which reduces your LDL (bad cholesterol) level. Soluble fiber is also found in foods such as kidney beans, apples, pears, psyllium, barley, and prunes.
- **Walnuts and almonds.** Studies have shown that walnuts can significantly reduce blood cholesterol. Rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids, walnuts also help keep blood vessels healthy and elastic. Almonds and other nuts, such as hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, and pine nuts, appear to have a similar effect.
- **Fish and omega-3 fatty acids.** Research has supported the cholesterol-lowering benefits of eating fatty fish because of its high levels of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids also help the heart in other ways, such as reducing blood pressure and the risk of blood clots. In people who already have had heart attacks, omega-3 fatty acids significantly reduce the risk of sudden death.
- **Olive oil.** Olive oil contains a potent mix of antioxidants that can lower your level of LDL (bad) cholesterol but leave your HDL (good) cholesterol untouched. Research suggests that the cholesterol-lowering effects of olive oil are even greater if you choose extra-virgin olive oil. Avoid the "light" olive oils.
- **Foods fortified with plant sterols and stanols.** Foods are now available that have been fortified with sterols and stanols, which are substances found in plants that help block the absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine. Plant sterols/stanols in fortified foods don't appear to affect levels of triglycerides, or HDL (good) cholesterol; or with the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, and K).

Source: www.mayoclinic.com & UPS Road Map to Health

Cholesterol Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Many people have questions for their doctor about tests, drug treatments, risk factors, and lifestyle changes. Here are some examples of questions to ask your doctor:

- What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
- What are my cholesterol goals?
- How long will it take to reach my cholesterol goals?
- How often should I have my levels checked?
- How does exercise affect my cholesterol levels?
- What types of food should I eat?
- Do I need to lose weight and, if so, how much?
- Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?
- What should I know about the medicine?
- What are the side effects?

Source: UPS RoadMap to Health



Cholesterol and Eggs

One egg contains about 213 milligrams (mg) of dietary cholesterol. The daily recommended cholesterol limit is less than 300mg for people with normal LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. An egg can fit within heart-healthy guidelines for those people only if cholesterol from other sources—such as meats, poultry, and dairy products—is limited.

Source: www.americanheart.org

Saturated Fats

The best way to maintain healthy levels of cholesterol in your diet is to limit foods high in saturated fats, including the following:

- Fatty meats
- Full fat dairy products
- Processed meats
- Snack foods
- Deep fried foods

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au



Cholesterol Medications

Statins

Statins are one of the most effective types of drugs for reducing elevated LDL (bad) cholesterol. Most of the side effects are mild and generally go away as your body adjusts to the medication. Muscle problems and liver abnormalities are rare. If you have brown urine or muscle aches and pains while taking statins, contact your doctor right away.

Fibrates

Fibrates are best for lowering triglycerides and in some cases increasing HDL (good) cholesterol levels. These drugs are not very effective in lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol. That's why fibrates are generally used in people with high triglycerides or low HDL, after reaching desired LDL levels.

Resins

Resins are also called bile-binding drugs. Your body uses cholesterol to make bile, an acid used in the digestive process. These medicines bind to bile to prevent it from being used during digestion. Your liver responds by making more bile. The more bile your liver makes, the more cholesterol it uses. That means less cholesterol is left to circulate through your bloodstream.

Nicotinic Acid

This drug works in the liver by affecting the production of blood fats. Niacin is prescribed to lower triglycerides and HDL cholesterol.

Cholesterol-Lowering Supplements

If you are worried about your cholesterol and have already started exercising and eating healthier foods, you may wonder if adding a cholesterol-lowering supplement to your diet can help reduce your numbers. Although few natural products have been proved to reduce cholesterol, some might be helpful. With your doctor's approval, you may consider using one of the following supplements or products.

Artichoke extract	Blond psyllium	Garlic extract
Barley	Fish oil	Oat bran
Beta-sitosterol	Ground flaxseed	Sitostanol

Source: www.mayoclinic.com & www.americanheart.org

Lifestyle Tips

Changing some of your lifestyle habits may also help reduce your cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Here are some suggestions.

- Stop or reduce alcohol consumption, limiting intake to no more than one or two drinks per day.
- Don't smoke. Smoking makes it easier for LDL (bad) cholesterol to get into your artery cells and cause damage.
- Exercise regularly—for example, at least 30 minutes of brisk walking each day. Exercise increases your HDL (good) cholesterol levels, while reducing LDL and triglyceride levels in the body.
- Lose any excess body fat. Being overweight may contribute to higher triglyceride and LDL levels.
- Control your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes. High blood sugars are linked to an increased risk of atherosclerosis.

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