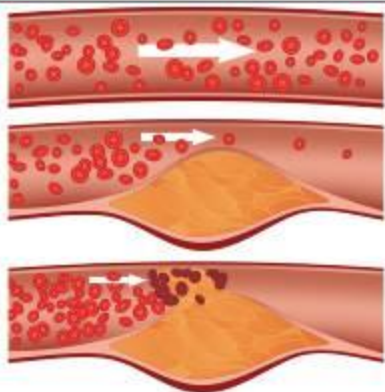


The Wellness News

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Cholesterol: Managing Your Numbers

We have all heard about cholesterol, but what does it really mean? At times, all of the different cholesterol numbers can seem overwhelming. Luckily, managing cholesterol is related to lifestyle choices and can be controlled by making good decisions on a regular basis.

What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a substance that is necessary for normal functioning of the body. Some cholesterol is produced by your liver, while the rest of your cholesterol comes from the foods you eat. The cholesterol that is produced naturally by your body can be affected by genetics and therefore elevated cholesterol levels can run in families; cholesterol that comes from food is only found in animal products. Ideally, total cholesterol numbers should be less than 200 mg/dL. High cholesterol, or hypercholesterolemia, is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Types of Cholesterol:

There are two main categories of cholesterol:

1) HDL, or “good” cholesterol, stands for High Density Lipoprotein. HDL is often called the good cholesterol because of its ability to protect against heart attack and stroke; this type of cholesterol helps prevent

the bad cholesterol from sticking to arteries. Acceptable levels for HDL are greater than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women.

2) LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, stands for Low Density Lipoprotein. Excess LDL cholesterol in the blood may stick to artery walls, increasing the risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular events. LDL levels should be less than 130 mg/dL.

Why Do I Need to Manage My Cholesterol?

Excess cholesterol can build up in the arteries through a process called atherosclerosis. The accumulation of plaque in the arteries may eventually block blood flow to the heart and brain, resulting in a heart attack or stroke. Other risk factors, like diabetes or hypertension, can further increase the risk for cardiovascular events. Cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in the United States; it is also one of the most preventable!

All adults 20 years and older should have a fasting lipoprotein profile, which is a measurement of all cholesterol and triglycerides, every 5 years.

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Control Your Cholesterol through Diet and Exercise

Even though elevated cholesterol levels can partially attributed to heredity, it can also be controlled with proper lifestyle choices. Diet and exercise are key players in the amount of cholesterol in your blood. If there is a family history of high cholesterol, medications may be necessary to control cholesterol levels. However, diet and exercise in addition to medication are all important to manage levels.

What does a heart-healthy diet consist of?

- Eat a diet with plenty of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.
- Always choose low-fat and fat-free dairy products.
- Use natural oils such as olive, canola, sunflower, and safflower oil.
- Avoid processed foods and hydrogenated oils.

- Include fiber-rich food sources in your daily intake.
- Use soft margarine with 0 g trans fat as a substitute for butter.
- Limit fried foods and baked goods as much as possible.
- Consume healthy fats from sources like fish, nuts, and seeds.

Exercise

The American Heart Association recommends participating in 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week to maintain cardiovascular health. Exercise helps the body become more efficient in all processes, including cholesterol metabolism. From squats and lunges to biking and jump roping, do something that increases your heart rate on a regular basis!

Avoid Tobacco for Better Cholesterol

In addition to diet and exercise, tobacco use is another major risk factor for cholesterol and heart disease. Smoking decreases tolerance for physical activity and increases blood clots. An increased frequency of blood clots with already hardening arteries is a deadly combination. Smoking also decreases HDL cholesterol, making your cardiovascular system more vulnerable to disease. Overall, tobacco use harms cholesterol levels and increases risk for cardiovascular events.



Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-800-433-2320

Sources: www.heart.org, www.webmd.com, www.nih.gov