



Live Healthy and Be Active with TakeCare

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. It is produced in the body mostly by the liver. It also comes from the food we eat. Eating too much fatty food can lead to high cholesterol levels in your blood and may clog your arteries. High blood cholesterol can increase your risk of having heart disease, heart attack or stroke.

There are several factors that contribute to high cholesterol. These include:

- **Family history**
- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Race or ethnicity**
- **Diet**
- **Alcohol Use**
- **Physical inactivity**
- **Obesity**

How do I know if my cholesterol level is high?

High Cholesterol usually has no signs or symptoms until significant damage has been done. The only way to find out if your cholesterol is high is to have a blood test known as the Lipid panel or Lipid profile.

A lipid profile is a blood test that measures the amount of cholesterol and fats, called triglycerides, in the blood. This test can help predict your risk of heart disease.

Lipid tests provide results for four different types of lipids:

- **Total Cholesterol:** All cholesterol combined
- **LDL (Low density lipoprotein):** is called “BAD” cholesterol because it contributes to plaque that can clog arteries and make them less flexible.
- **HDL (High density lipoprotein):** is called “GOOD” cholesterol because it helps remove bad cholesterol from the arteries.
- **Triglycerides:** A type of fat in the blood when present in excess, can be stored in fatty deposits, which may lead to obesity and related health conditions such as heart disease.



Knowing your cholesterol levels is an essential part of understanding your own risk for heart disease. This allows you to make early lifestyle changes that reduce your cholesterol and triglycerides level.

You can take several steps to maintain a normal cholesterol level.

- **Eat a heart – healthy diet.** Eat foods that are naturally low in fat. These include whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean protein.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Losing weight can help bring your HDL (“good”) cholesterol up, and your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol down.
- **Make Exercise a Routine.** Moderate activity like brisk walking can also help lower triglycerides while vigorous exercise like running can boost HDL. Aim to be physically active for 30 minutes on most, if not all, days.
- **Avoid or Quit Smoking.** Giving up cigarettes can increase HDL (“good”) cholesterol. This is the single biggest change you can make to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** Regularly drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can increase cholesterol and triglycerides level.
- **Medication.** If diet and exercise don’t lower your cholesterol levels drug treatment may be needed.

The TakeCare Wellness Team has made this pamphlet available to help you understand information about your health. This pamphlet includes general wellness and health information and is not meant to replace the advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. If you are under medical care and have concerns, always follow your doctor’s recommendations.

For more information about your health, ask your health care provider.

References

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