

1. Healthy Heart Living

Above normal cholesterol levels in the blood are associated with heart disease (clogged arteries). Decreasing the levels lowers the health risk.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a soft fat-like substance that is naturally produced by the body and is necessary for important body processes. The liver makes much of our cholesterol. Another source is the food we eat; such as meat, poultry, fish, egg yolks and dairy products.

There are different types of cholesterol produced in your body. The “good” one is HDL which travels through the blood stream carrying “bad” cholesterol away. I like to call it the “soap suds”. Lots of physical activity helps raise HDL levels! The “bad” one is LDL and it attaches to artery walls as a building block for the plaque that clogs artery walls. The third cholesterol is triglyceride. It is the fat in food, body fat, part of the HDL and LDL. The fat in chicken and steak is actually triglyceride. The breakdown parts of certain sugars are formed into triglycerides. Extra calories you eat are stored as triglycerides. High triglyceride and low HDL levels in the blood are associated with increased risk of heart disease. Get to know your cholesterol “numbers” as they will help you to know whether you should modify your eating and exercise to decrease your heart disease risk.

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| Cholesterol | – less than 200 mg/dL |
| LDL | - less than 130mg/dL |
| | - less than 100 mg/dL if you have diabetes or known heart disease |
| HDL | – above 60 is considered protective |
| Triglycerides | – less than 150 are considered normal |

2. Fats in your diet – Toward Healthy Heart Living (cont’)

Strive to eat less fat overall. Pay particular attention to reducing saturated and trans fats.

There are 4 types that we eat:

Saturated fat: fats on meats, poultry, fat-containing milk, cheese, cream, butter, palm and coconut oils. These tend to raise LDL (bad) cholesterol.

Trans fat: Most of these fats are formed by “hydrogenating” liquid oils to form a sort of solid fat. Shortening and stick margarines are good examples. This fat is used in crackers, cookies, snack foods, deep frying and other baking. These tend to raise LDL and lower HDL (good) cholesterol. Aim to eliminate these. One recent recommendation is less than 2 gm/day. It is now listed under fats on nutrition labels. If “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oil is one of the first ingredients listed – beware. Note that many foods have just under .1/2gm of trans fats so it can be listed as zero trans fat. Several servings of just under .5 gm do add up quickly for 2 grams or more.

Monounsaturated fat: are liquid at room temperature, though start to harden when chilled. They are found in olive oil, canola, almond and peanut oils plus nuts. They seem to effect lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol without lowering “good” cholesterol.

Polyunsaturated fat: are also liquid and remain liquid when chilled. They come from corn, soybean, safflower and sunflowers seeds. These oils may lower LSL levels but if used in large amounts also reduce HDL (good) cholesterol as well.

Better nutrition, physical activity and weight control are weapons against heart disease.