

February 2020 Issue

Take Care of Your Cholesterol

Understanding cholesterol can be confusing. What exactly is it, and why is it so important to our health? And, why is some cholesterol considered bad and other good? A waxy substance produced by the liver, cholesterol is used by our bodies to build healthy cells. It poses a problem when we consume foods high in saturated and trans fats that cause the liver to overproduce cholesterol, which then can accumulate in the inner walls of the arteries. In turn, this can narrow the arteries and reduce their flexibility.



Two Types of Cholesterol and Triglycerides

- **LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol**, or "bad cholesterol," can lead to development of a sticky substance that clogs the arteries.
- **HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol**, or "healthy cholesterol," carries the cholesterol in the blood back to the liver, where it is broken down.
- **Triglycerides** are a common type of fat in the body that stores excess energy.

Cholesterol's Impact on Heart Health

Unfortunately, elevated cholesterol in itself does not cause obvious symptoms until it reaches a level that results in a medical emergency. When high levels of triglycerides combine with high levels of LDL (bad) or low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, they can form hard deposits on the inside of the arteries. This leads to restricted blood flow and hardening of the artery walls – also known as atherosclerosis. This is a serious condition that significantly increases the risk of a heart attack and stroke, two leading causes of death in the United States.

With a lack of signs or symptoms, many people do not realize their cholesterol numbers might be in an unhealthy or high-risk range. For this reason, the American Heart Association recommends adults ages 20 or older have their cholesterol checked every four to six years. However, it is essential to consult with your primary care physician to determine how frequently your cholesterol should be checked due to additional factors such as age, gender, heredity and other medical conditions.

Know the Numbers

Total Cholesterol

- **Optimal:** Less than 200 mg/dL
- **Borderline High:** 200 – 239 mg/dL
- **High:** 240 mg/dL or above

LDL Cholesterol

- **Optimal:** Less than 100 mg/dL
- **Borderline High:** 100 -129 mg/dL
- **High:** 130-159 mg/dL
- **Very High:** 160-190 mg/dL

HDL Cholesterol

- **Optimal:** 60 mg/dL or more
- **Borderline Low:** 40 – 59 mg/dL
- **Low:** 40 mg/dL or less

Prevention and Treatment of High Cholesterol

Fortunately, it's never too late to make changes that can help lower high cholesterol and reduce related health risks. Two powerful steps to take in improving cholesterol levels are exercising and consuming a heart-healthy diet:



- **Exercise:** Physical activity has been shown to significantly increase HDL (good) cholesterol, which improves overall cholesterol levels.
- **Nutrition:** From a dietary standpoint, the best way to lower your cholesterol is to reduce saturated fat and trans fat and increase consumption of heart-healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables and nuts. The American Heart Association recommends limiting saturated fat to 5 to 6 percent of daily calories and minimizing the amount of trans fat you eat.


Additionally, **quitting smoking** can lower cholesterol levels and help protect the arteries. For some people, lifestyle changes to their dietary habits or physical activity may prevent or treat unhealthy cholesterol levels. For others, cholesterol-lowering **medication** prescribed by a physician also might be needed.

Remember the 3 Cs of Cholesterol


When it comes to cholesterol, the American Heart Association advises remembering the 3 Cs:

- **Check** your cholesterol levels. It's key to know your numbers.
- **Change** your diet and lifestyle to help improve your levels.
- **Control** your cholesterol, with help from your doctor if needed.


Health Talk Live



Signs a woman should look for when her heart is in trouble
This event is FREE and no reservation is required



Regina Kayse, MD

DATE:
Tuesday,
February 25, 2020


Kathryn O'Keefe, MD

TIME:
9:00 to 10:00 a.m.

TriHealth Fitness & Health Pavilion
6200 Pfeiffer Road
Cincinnati, OH 45242



TriHealth.com/heart