**CHOLESTEROL: What You Should Know**

**Q: What is cholesterol?**
A: Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body.

**Q: Why is high blood cholesterol bad for your heart?**
A: Having too much cholesterol in your blood stream can clog your arteries. This increases your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

**Q: What is good and bad cholesterol?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD CHOLESTEROL (HDL) “H” is for Healthy</th>
<th>BAD CHOLESTEROL (LDL) “L” is for Lousy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HDL is “good cholesterol.” It helps clean fat and cholesterol from your blood vessels. Ideal is ≥ 40 mg/dl</td>
<td>LDL is “bad cholesterol.” It carries cholesterol to your blood vessels, clogging them like rust in a pipe. Ideal is &lt;100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q: What causes high cholesterol?**
A: Many things can cause high cholesterol, including:
- Diet: Eating too much saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol can raise your cholesterol.
  - Saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol are in foods that come from animals (such as meats, whole milk, egg yolks, butter, and cheese), many packaged foods, and snack foods like cookies, crackers, and chips.
- Weight: Being overweight may raise triglycerides and lower “good” HDL.
- Activity level: Not exercising may raise “bad” LDL and lower “good” HDL.
- Overall health: Diseases such as low thyroid can raise cholesterol. Smoking may lower HDL.
- Age: Cholesterol starts to rise after age 20.
  - In men, cholesterol usually levels off after age 50.
  - In women, cholesterol stays fairly low until menopause. After that, cholesterol levels rise to about the same levels as in men.
- Family: Some people inherit cholesterol problems from their parents.

**Q: What are the symptoms?**
A: High cholesterol doesn't make you feel sick. But if cholesterol builds up in your arteries, it can block blood flow to your heart or brain and cause a heart attack or stroke. By the time you find out you have high cholesterol, it may already be clogging your arteries.

**Q: How is high cholesterol diagnosed?**
A: Doctors use a blood test to check cholesterol.
- A simple cholesterol blood test can measure total cholesterol and HDL. You can eat before this test.
- A fasting cholesterol test (also called a lipid panel) is the most complete test. It measures total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, and triglycerides. You cannot have food for 9 to 12 hours before this test.

**Q: What are triglycerides?**
A: Triglycerides are another type of fat found in the blood. When your triglycerides are high, they can raise your risk for heart disease. A healthy triglyceride level is less than 150 mg/dl.

**Q: How is high cholesterol treated?**
A: Your treatment will depend on your lipid levels, your heart disease risk factors, and your general health.
- As a first step, your healthcare team will recommend lifestyle changes including watching your diet, increasing exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight if needed.
- If your healthcare team decides that you are at increased risk for heart disease and you need stronger treatment than lifestyle changes, medications can help. Common lipid-lowering medications include:
  - “Statin” drugs, which prevent your liver from manufacturing cholesterol
  - Fibrates
  - Niacin (Vitamin B3)
## CHOLESTEROL: What You Should Do

### WHAT YOU AND YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM WILL FOLLOW:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cholesterol:</th>
<th>My Total Cholesterol:_________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 200 mg/dL: Ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good for you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200 to 239 mg/dL: Borderline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be alert!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>240 mg/dL or more: High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss with your healthcare team!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOW WILL YOU HELP YOURSELF?

- **Have your blood cholesterol checked.**
  - If you are 20 years of age or older, check your cholesterol at least every 5 years.
  - Your doctor may test you more often if your cholesterol levels are high.
  - Talk to your doctor about what your cholesterol numbers mean.

- **LDL (Bad) Cholesterol: My LDL Cholesterol:_______**
  - Less than 100 mg/dL is ideal.
  - Keep it low!

- **HDL (Good) Cholesterol: My HDL Cholesterol:_______**
  - Keep it 40 mg/dL or higher.
  - The higher, the better!

- **Triglycerides: My triglyceride number:________**
  - Less than 150 mg/dL.
  - Keep them low!

- **Blood Pressure: BP: _____/______**
  - My weight: _________
  - My BMI: (18.5-24.9 ideal)
  - BP Goal: _____/______
  - My goal weight: _________

### MEDICATION

- **Your doctor may also prescribe cholesterol-lowering medicine.**
  - Medication name: ________________
  - Medication dose: ________________

### METABOLIC SYNDROME

- **The metabolic syndrome is a group of factors that increase your chances of developing heart disease or stroke. The metabolic syndrome also increases your risk for diabetes.**

- **Check the factors of metabolic syndrome you have:**
  - High waist measurement
    - More than 35 inches for women
    - More than 40 inches for men
  - High triglyceride level (150 mg/dL or more)
  - Low HDL (good) cholesterol level
    - Less than 50 mg/dL for women
    - Less than 40 mg/dL for men
  - Blood pressure of 130/85 or more
  - High fasting blood sugar (100 mg/dL or more)

- **IF YOU DO HAVE THREE OR MORE OF THESE FACTORS, TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT THE METABOLIC SYNDROME.**