

7039 - Cholesterol

Definition:

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that's found in the fats (lipids) in your blood. While your body needs cholesterol to continue building healthy cells, having high cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease.

When you have high cholesterol, you may develop fatty deposits in your blood vessels. Which can eventually make it difficult for enough blood to flow through your arteries. Your heart may not get as much oxygen-rich blood as it needs, which increases the risk of a heart attack. Decreased blood flow to your brain can cause a stroke.

Fact:

Including cholesterol on the nutritional information panel is rather insignificant because this only represents dietary cholesterol which does not directly affect people's blood levels of cholesterol.

Symptoms:

High cholesterol has no symptoms. A blood test is the only way to detect high cholesterol.

Causes:

It is up to the liver to make good (HDL) or bad (LDL) cholesterol or Triglyceride (TG) from the total amount and type of fat it has access to every day. All three of these types of blood fat make up your cholesterol level and it depends on the individual levels as to how best to treat it, and the ratio of the good (HDL) to total that really predicts your risk. Best to request a Lipid Profile when having blood work done to get at all this detail!

Risk Factors:

Factors within your control, such as inactivity, obesity and an unhealthy diet — contribute to high LDL cholesterol and low HDL cholesterol. Factors beyond your control may play a role, too. For example, your genetic makeup may keep cells from removing LDL cholesterol from your blood efficiently or cause your liver to produce too much cholesterol. Note: Waist circumference is also a good indicator of risk.

Treatments:

High cholesterol (hypercholesterolemia) can be inherited, but is often preventable and treatable. A healthy diet, regular exercise and sometimes medication can go a long way toward reducing high cholesterol.

Recommended Levels:

HDL: Men >1.2 mmol/L and Women 1.0 mmol/L

*HDL is determined mainly by your genetics but improves if you are at a healthy weight, non-smoker non-drinker, regular exerciser.

LDL: <3.5 mmol/L - mainly from saturated fats in diet (meat, >2% milk, >20% cheese etc.)

TG: <1.7 mmol/L - mainly from excess simple sugars in diet (fruit, juice, pop, alcohol, candy, etc.)

Total cholesterol: < 5.2 mmol/L

Total Chol/HDL ratio: <5

*It is important to know which ones are elevated in order to treat appropriately. And this is why a healthy weight is so important – to decrease the building blocks (fat molecules) that are used to make your own cholesterol. So dietary cholesterol really doesn't play that large a role.

It is much more accurate and effective to talk about total fat in a day. If someone has to lower their cholesterol level then they will likely have to lower their fat intake, increase their fibre intake and lose some weight!

Goal for fat for most women: ~ 45-65 grams per day total (mostly from unsaturated fats).

Goal for fibre for women: 25 grams per day.

Waist circumference (WC) is also a good predictor of risk. Women should aim for a WC < 35 inches.

For Further Information:

www.heartandstroke.ca - under the 'understanding cholesterol' section

www.loveyourheart.ca – look for the cholesterol 101 section for some basic facts

9 Steps To Reduce Your Cholesterol Levels!

1. Reduce your intake of saturated fats to 7% or less of all calories consumed.
2. Reduce dietary cholesterol – eat smaller portions of meat with the fat trimmed, limit your consumption of eggs and cook your food more often by baking, broiling, steaming and boiling.
3. Reduce total fat in your diet.
4. Increase dietary fiber – fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains.
5. Eat more vegetable proteins and less animal proteins – soy products, nuts, brown rice and beans.
6. Manage your weight.
7. Increase antioxidants in your diet as they may help prevent cholesterol buildup in your arteries.
8. Increase your physical activity – it increases HDL, burns fat, and helps control weight.
9. Consult a physician about medication if necessary.

Source: <http://www.positivehealthsteps.com/>

lower-cholesterol.shtm

