

Health Balancesm news wire
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Cholesterol
Know your numbers for a healthy heart

LDL cholesterol is the "bad" cholesterol that can build up in your arteries, leading to a higher risk of heart attack and stroke. Because no one can feel high cholesterol, you may not even be aware of having a problem. A simple blood test offered by your primary care provider can tell you if you are at risk.

If you do have high cholesterol, there are several things you can do to lower it and prevent future problems. Early detection is the key. Coronary heart disease is the number one preventable cause of death for both men and women.

Know your cholesterol numbers:

LDL goal: 100 mg/dL or lower
LDL or "bad" cholesterol builds up in your arteries.
Lower LDL numbers are better.

HDL goal: 40 mg/dL or above
HDL or "good" cholesterol protects against heart disease.
High HDL numbers are better.

Total cholesterol goal: Less than 200 mg/dL

Improve your cholesterol numbers with these healthy tips:

- Quit smoking. Call the Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for help.
- Exercise and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat foods low in cholesterol, saturated fat and trans fats.

Exercise tips:

Talk to your doctor about the right exercise for you. Work to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise, five days a week. Add strength and flexibility stretches for a complete routine.

Eating tips:

Eat at least 25 to 30 grams of dietary fiber each day - preferably from whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes. Your diet should be rich in vegetables and fruits, with whole grains, high-fiber foods, lean meats and poultry, fish (at least twice a week), and fat-free or 1 percent fat dairy products. Also, your diet should be low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. And if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation (no more than one drink a day for women, no more than two for men).

Have your cholesterol checked:

Screenings for cholesterol levels, triglycerides, blood pressure, waist-to-hip ratio and body-mass index are available from your health care provider for low out-of-pocket costs. Refer to your summary of benefits for details.

When you're done, you can find out more information about your numbers through WebMD HealthQuotient. Follow the link from your myProvidence home page.

Remember, good cholesterol numbers help reduce your risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

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