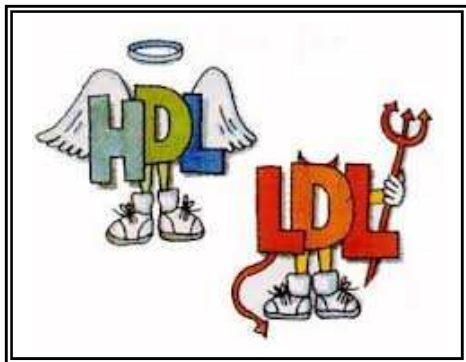


Cholesterol

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Truth

The National Cholesterol Education Awareness Month

September, 2012



What is Cholesterol?

It is a waxy substance found in the lipids (fats) in your blood. Cholesterol is naturally manufactured in your body in order to build healthy cells, to assist in nerve function, to produce certain hormones, and to help absorb fat soluble vitamins. However, in today's diet, there are tendencies to have an excessive amount of cholesterol, in which our bodies have to dispose of before it builds up in our arteries.

Total Cholesterol (TC) is composed of three types:

- **HDL- "Good Cholesterol"**. This is high-density lipoproteins, which help "carry" the LDL cholesterol out of the bloodstream.
- **LDL- "Bad Cholesterol"**. This is low-density lipoproteins. When there is too much, it can build plaque in the artery walls, causing blockage of oxygen rich blood to the heart and body.
- **VLDL- "Very Bad Cholesterol"**. This is very-low-density lipoproteins, which can also contribute to plaque buildup.

What are Triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat in the bloodstream, which come from both food and manufactured by the body. Although our body needs triglycerides for energy and building blocks for cells, too much can contribute to heart disease and diabetes.

Symptoms:

Unfortunately, there are no symptoms of high cholesterol or triglycerides, until there is blockage within the arterial walls. When a blockage happens there may be chest pain (angina), heart attack, or stroke.

What are the Risks?

- Diet high in cholesterol and saturated fats.
- Family history of heart disease.
- Obesity. People who are obese have a greater chance of developing high cholesterol.
- Diabetes. High blood sugar contributes to higher LDL cholesterol and can damage the lining of the blood vessels, causing plaque to build.
- High blood pressure. With high blood pressure, it creates irritation on the wall of the arteries. This in turn can cause the accumulation of plaque to form.
- Lack of exercise. Exercise raises the HDL cholesterol and lowers the LDL cholesterol.
- Smoking damages the lining of the blood vessels and lowers the HDL cholesterol.

What can you do? There are some changes that can be done to lower cholesterol and triglycerides, and raise HDL levels. Here are some:

- Exercise.
- Lose weight if needed.
- Limit "bad" fats and choose "healthier" fats.
- Eat whole grains and increase fiber intake.
- Eliminate trans fats.
- Eat heart-healthy fish.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- If you smoke, try and quit.
- Medications are also available to lower cholesterol and/or triglycerides.

What's next? Once you find out your "numbers", one can choose to make changes, by setting up a heart-healthy plan or maintain an already healthy diet and exercise routine.

