

Hyperlipidemia (High Cholesterol) – Commonly Asked Questions

This guide is designed to help case managers provide answers to common questions they may hear from clients about the chronic condition, hyperlipidemia. It is helpful for case managers to keep this guide where they can refer to it quickly when they get questions from clients.

What do I need to know about hyperlipidemia?

What is hyperlipidemia (or “high cholesterol”)?

Hyperlipidemia is a condition in which cholesterol, a substance which normally circulates in the bloodstream, is present in excessive amounts.

Is this the same thing as “high cholesterol”?

Yes.

What is a “lipid”?

“Lipid” means “fat.” Hyperlipidemia means too much fat in the bloodstream, in the form of cholesterol.

Why is this a problem?

Hyperlipidemia (or “high cholesterol”) increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

If I am a vegetarian and do not eat foods with cholesterol in them, does that mean I cannot have hyperlipidemia?

No, the body makes its own cholesterol in addition to that which a person eats. Reducing intake of saturated fats especially – those found in meat and dairy products – may reduce cholesterol to some degree. But vegetarians can have hyperlipidemia, too.

How is hyperlipidemia diagnosed?

With a simple blood test – people taking antipsychotic medication should have this done annually.

What are normal and abnormal cholesterol levels?

HDL is sometimes called “good cholesterol” – it has beneficial effects. HIGHER HDL levels are better - think “H” as in “higher.” LDL is sometimes called “bad cholesterol.” LOWER LDL levels are better. Total Cholesterol should also be LOWER.

Men age 20 or older:	
Type of Cholesterol	Healthy Level
Total Cholesterol	125 to 200 mg/dL
Non-HDL	Less than 130 mg/dL
LDL	Less than 130 mg/dL
HDL	40 mg/dL or higher

Women age 20 or older:	
Type of Cholesterol	Healthy Level
Total Cholesterol	125 to 200 mg/dL
Non-HDL	Less than 130 mg/dL
LDL	Less than 130 mg/dL
HDL	50 mg/dL or higher



So, I have hyperlipidemia - what do I do now?

How can I lower my cholesterol?

- A heart-healthy eating plan limits the amount of saturated and trans fats that you eat, which are found in red meat and full-fat dairy products.
- Weight reduction can help lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol.
- Everyone should get regular physical activity (30 minutes on most, if not all, days).
- Quitting smoking can raise your HDL (good) cholesterol. Since HDL (good) helps to remove LDL (bad) cholesterol from your arteries, having more HDL (good) can help to lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol.
- **Medications.** If lifestyle changes alone do not lower your cholesterol enough, and especially if you have other risk factors, like diabetes or a prior heart attack or stroke, you may also need to take medication. There are several types of cholesterol medicines available, including statins, like atorvastatin (Lipitor), simvastatin (Zocor), and rosuvastatin (Crestor.) While you are taking medicines to lower your cholesterol, you should continue with the lifestyle changes.

Where can I read more about hyperlipidemia?

- American Heart Association: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/>
- MedlinePlus: <https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterol.html>

