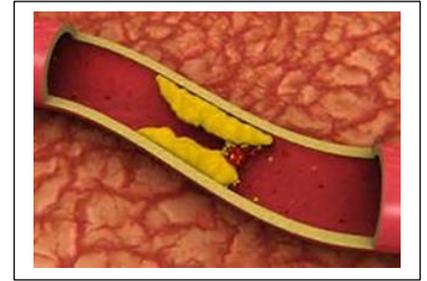


# **Cholesterol 101: What you need to know**

*Posted By National Wellness Institute, Friday, August 01, 2014*



## **The Basics:**

- Cholesterol is both created by your body and can be ingested through the foods you eat.
- There is “good” and “bad” cholesterol.
- Good Cholesterol (HDL), is considered beneficial because it helps remove LDL cholesterol (“bad” artery clogging cholesterol) from the arteries. HDL carries LDL cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it is broken down and passed from the body. Individuals need healthy HDL levels (guide below) to keep their LDL levels in check. Think of HDL as “happy” cholesterol.
- Bad Cholesterol (LDL), is harmful because it contributes to plaque that can clog arteries and make them less flexible. Clots can block arteries resulting in heart attack or stroke. Clots can also cause blockages in the arteries that supply blood to the legs (peripheral artery disease) resulting in constant leg pain or even open sores. Peripheral artery disease can also lead to heart attack or stroke. Think of LDL as “lousy” cholesterol.
- Triglycerides are a type of fat. This fat stores excess energy (calories consumed) from your diet. While we need to store some energy, storing too much is associated with overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, cigarette smoking, excess alcohol consumption and a diet very high in carbohydrates (more than 60 percent of total calories).
- Lp(a) is a type of LDL “lousy” cholesterol. A high level of Lp(a) is a significant risk factor for the premature development of fatty deposits in arteries.

## **The numbers: (Please note this has been updated to include Canadian measurement units – measured in mmol/L, or Millimoles per Litre)**

- Total Cholesterol = HDL + LDL + 20% of Triglyceride levels. Individuals should aim for levels below 5.2.
- HDL “healthy” cholesterol for men should be 1.0 and above, and for women should be 1.30 and above.
- As for LDL “lousy” cholesterol...Individuals are said to be
  - well at below 3.5
- Triglycerides are said to be
  - normal when they are less than 1.7

## **How to improve your numbers:**

- Exercise helps to increase HDL “healthy” cholesterol
- To lower your LDL and triglycerides
  - Quit smoking
  - Exercise
  - Eat more fruits and vegetables, fish, and fibre, less carbohydrates, processed foods, and saturated fat

Note: The American Heart Association recommends that individuals 20 years of age and older have their levels checked every 4-6 years.

American Heart Association. What your cholesterol levels mean. Retrieved on July 21, 2014 from [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/What-Your-Cholesterol-Levels-Mean\\_UCM\\_305562\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/What-Your-Cholesterol-Levels-Mean_UCM_305562_Article.jsp)

Mayo Clinic. Peripheral artery disease (PAD). Retrieved on July 21, 2014 from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/peripheral-artery-disease/basics/causes/con-20028731>

MedlinePLUS. Understanding cholesterol results. Retrieved on July 21, 2014 from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000386.htm>

WebMD. 11 tips to cut your cholesterol fast. Retrieved on July 21, 2014 from <http://www.webmd.com/cholesterol-management/features/11-tips-to-cut-your-cholesterol-fast?page=3>

WebMD. Cholesterol & Triglycerides Health Center. Retrieved on July 21, 2014 from <http://www.webmd.com/cholesterol-management/lowering-triglyceride-levels>