

Hyperlipidemia – 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?

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 “elevated cholesterol”) increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

If I am a vegetarian and eat no 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 especially saturated fats – 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 200mg/dL
Non-HDL	Less than 130mg/dL
LDL	Less than 100mg/dL
HDL	40mg/dL or higher
Women age 20 or older:	
Type of Cholesterol	Healthy Level
Total Cholesterol	125 to 200mg/dL
Non-HDL	Less than 130mg/dL
LDL	Less than 100mg/dL
HDL	50mg/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, these 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, you may also need to take medication. There are several types of cholesterol medicines available, including statins. While you are taking medicines to lower your cholesterol, you should continue with the lifestyle changes. Work with your primary care provider to find the right medications.

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>