

## METABOLIC AND BODY SHAPE CHANGES

# Managing Cholesterol and Triglycerides (Blood Lipids)

Cholesterol and triglycerides are two types of fat found in foods and also produced in the body. Cholesterol is necessary for important body functions, but risk for heart disease increases when blood levels of cholesterol and triglycerides are higher than normal. A fasting blood test is recommended to measure the amounts in your blood.

In general, limiting/reducing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet can lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels. However, HIV infection and some anti-HIV medications can cause elevated triglyceride and cholesterol levels. Ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian to discuss your diet.

### What to do to reduce cholesterol levels and lower risk for heart disease:

- Maintain a healthy weight and keep waist circumference well below 40 inches for men and below 35 inches for women.
- Reduce the fat content of your meals particularly saturated, hydrogenated and trans fats. These fats can be found in butter, some margarines, fatty meats such as sausage, salami, bologna, bacon, hot dogs and pepperoni, chicken skin, cheese, gravies, sauces, desserts, crackers, cookies, lard and foods that include the words hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat in the list of ingredients.
- Choose mono- and polyunsaturated fats over saturated fatty foods. For example, nuts, seeds, oils (canola, olive, safflower and peanut) and avocado.
- Add more foods with fiber such as vegetables, fruits, beans and whole grains. Aim for at least 3 pieces of whole fruit and 2 cups of vegetables a day. Choose whole fruits over juice.

- Choose whole- wheat products over processed white flour items. The words *whole wheat* should be in the list of ingredients. Check the food label for fiber content. It is preferable to get at least 4 grams of fiber per slice.
- Eat one ounce of nuts such as walnuts or almonds five times a week. One ounce of nuts would fill an Altoids® can.
- Add soy products such as tofu to your diet a couple times a week or 25 grams a day.
- Choose non-fat or one percent (1%) fat dairy products. Avoid whole- and “low-fat” dairy products. That means 2% fat content or more.
- Consider plant stanol/sterols found in butter substitutes such as Take Control® or Benecol®. Consume 2-3 grams a day.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes each day.
- Stop smoking. Smoking is a known risk factor for heart disease.

### What to do to reduce your triglyceride level:

- Reduce all types of dietary fat. Try for 50 grams or less of fat a day.
- Increase Omega-3 fatty acids. Eat fish rich in this special fat (salmon, herring, sardines, anchovy, halibut and mackerel two to three times a week or about 7 ounces a week. (See note of caution for women of child-bearing age and small children below)
- Take a fish oil supplement if you do not like fish. Get one that includes DHA and EPA fatty acids.
- Add some flax oil, flaxseed (grind up) or flax meal to cereals, soups, yogurt, salads, etc.
- Restrict excessive calories, especially from refined sugars—table sugar, soda, high fructose corn syrup, candies and other sweets, large servings of bread or tortillas.

## Managing Cholesterol and Triglycerides (Blood Lipids) *continued*

- Switch to whole fruit or cut back on juice if consuming large amounts. A serving of juice is about 4-6 ounces or 1/2 to 3/4 of a cup.
- Cut down on alcohol. Even small amounts can lead to large changes in triglycerides. (4 oz a day is thought to be good in lowering cholesterol. However, in larger quantities, alcohol has been shown to increase triglyceride levels.
- Lose weight; even losing 10 lb. may be enough to decrease lipid levels.
- Lose weight if necessary.
- Be active, exercise daily. It is now recommended to get at least 30-60 minutes a day, every day. Before starting on any exercise routine, check with your provider first. Start slow and build up to comfortable levels. A combination of aerobic and weight resistance exercises is preferred.

### **% Daily Value**

Use the % daily value column on the food label to help you select foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber when comparing similar food items. A percent daily value of 5 to 10% represents a low to moderate source of the particular nutrient, vitamin or mineral or food component, whereas 20% or more is a high source.

For example, if it says a serving provides 25% of the saturated fat recommended when following a 2000 calorie diet, eating the serving size amount of this particular food would be a high source of saturated fat or one fourth of the amount you should eat in an entire day. However, this high source can be balanced by several other low percent food choices throughout the day. Try to keep the % daily value low, about 5% for saturated fat, cholesterol and sugars and a higher % daily value for fiber, say 10% or greater.

High lipid levels may be accompanied by other conditions of the metabolic syndrome such as diabetes, insulin resistance and/or high blood pressure. Please refer to the Self Management of Diabetes & Insulin Resistance and/or Metabolic and Body Shape Changes fact sheets for more information.

*Caution: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have advised that groups most sensitive to methyl mercury—women of childbearing age and young children—not eat swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish (golden bass or golden snapper) and shark, all of them having relatively high mercury levels. Furthermore, the FDA, which oversees fish sold in stores and restaurants, advises these women and children that 12 ounces a week, of various kinds of fish, is safe. The EPA, which is concerned with freshwater fish of the sort anglers bring home, advises the same group to eat no more than six ounces a week for adults or two ounces a week for children.*