

Fact Sheet

Nutrition: Cholesterol and Triglycerides

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy fat found in all cells of the body. The liver produces all the cholesterol the body needs to produce vitamin D, estrogen, testosterone, and cortisol. The body obtains additional cholesterol when foods that come from animals are consumed.

Lipoproteins carry cholesterol through the bloodstream and to and from cells. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is considered the “good” cholesterol because it carries excess cholesterol from other parts of the body to the liver, which removes it from the body. This helps keep blood vessels clear and unrestricted. On the other hand, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is considered the “bad” cholesterol because it can build up in the blood vessels to form plaque, which can cause narrowing and clogging of the blood vessels. Too much LDL increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Consider the following nutrition tips to help lower cholesterol in the body:

- Remove the skin from chicken and turkey before cooking
- Cook meat and poultry a day ahead of time and refrigerate, which allows hardened fat to be removed before heating
- Eat more fish
- Eat less meat
- Cook fresh vegetables
- Use liquid oils in place of fats
- Puree vegetables for baking in place of fats; use applesauce, bananas, and zucchini in place of fat.
- Choose low fat dairy products
- Increase whole grains and fiber

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a type of fat stored in excess fat cells and released to circulate in the blood when the body needs energy. High levels of triglycerides can be caused by obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol, low physical activity, and eating a diet high in calorie-dense foods and carbohydrates.

A combination of high triglycerides and low HDL (good cholesterol) levels can increase the risk for heart attack and stroke (NHLBI, 2022).

References:

- Cleveland Clinic. (2022, May 22). Lipoproteins. Retrieved on March 31, 2023, from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/23229-lipoprotein>
- Harvard Health Publishing. (2020, August 31). Should You Worry about High Triglycerides? Retrieved on March 31, 2023, from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/should-you-worry-about-high-triglycerides>
- Medline Plus. (2020, December 10). Cholesterol. Retrieved on March 31, 2023, from <https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterol.html>

09/23/KS