

***NORTH PROVIDENCE PRIMARY CARE ASSOC. INC.
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INTERNAL MEDICINE***

Your Doctor Has Your Number...

With all the emphasis on Heart Healthy, Low Fat, Low Cholesterol, Americans are focused on cholesterol and fat. There has been a nationwide campaign to urge people to become savvy food buyers and lower their cholesterol levels in hopes of preventing future heart disease.

Cholesterol is found in foods that we eat, but our bodies also have the ability to produce it as well. Cholesterol is necessary for life, but too much cholesterol can be harmful by forming cholesterol-rich plaques in arterial walls resulting in a decrease flow of blood to organs. If this occurs in a blood vessel to the heart this can cause angina or a heart attack.

So what does cholesterol number mean? The total cholesterol number is made up of the sum of triglycerides, LDL (bad cholesterol) and HDL (good cholesterol). Therefore high total cholesterol can be normal if the good cholesterol (HDL) is elevated. More physicians are therefore using the LDL number to base treatment.

LDL in the absence of cardiac risk factors should be <160. With two or more risk factors of heart disease such as age >45, family history of heart disease, smoking, hypertension, or diabetes, the LDL should not exceed 130. If there is already heart disease, LDL should not exceed 100.

There are multiple ways to lower one's cholesterol, of which the most important is diet and exercise. Medications such as HMG-COA reduces fibric acids, bile acid, sequestrants, and niacin can be used in refractory cases or those who are at greater risk of developing heart disease.

Therefore, cholesterol screening should be performed on all adult patients and repeated if normal every 5 years. So if you have not already, ask your doctor for a fasting cholesterol test and information on low cholesterol living.....Your heart will be glad you did.

Written by Dr. Anthony G. Farina Jr.