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Know Your Cholesterol Count

Although heart disease is one of our top killers, according to a survey in the mid-90s, only 8% of all Americans knew their cholesterol levels. This general lack of awareness of a silent killer has prompted concern among doctors. While at times research has produced some conflicting evidence, one message continues to be clear: *reducing the level of cholesterol lowers the rate of death from heart disease.*

There are two major types of cholesterol in the blood stream. Harmful low-density lipoproteins (LDL) carry cholesterol into the arteries where it can form plaques, which may block the flow of blood and cause a heart attack. Healthful high-density lipoproteins (HDL) carry LDL cholesterol from the arteries to the liver where it can be removed from the body. In essence, HDL serves as an arterial “scouring pad”.

- New national guidelines for doctors to aid in combating this danger have recently been released.
- Every American from age 20 on should be tested.
- If your total HDL-LDL is under 200, you should eat sensibly and have it checked again in five years.
- If your level is in the 200-239 range, you are at risk and should visit a registered dietician, who can set up a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. It is imperative that you be retested annually.
- When the level exceeds 240, adherence to a strict low-fat/low-cholesterol diet is mandatory. If significant improvement is not effected by dietary change within six months, medication may be indicated.

How to Lower HDL and Raise HDL

You can also lower LDL cholesterol by stopping smoking and losing weight if you are too heavy. Regular high-resistance, short-duration exercise such as strength training and low-resistance, long-duration exercise like aerobics in addition to their many other benefits, can raise healthful HDL cholesterol level.

In Health,

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