

Blood Lipids

What are blood lipids?

Lipids are fatty substances found in the blood that can be used by the body. The blood lipids include high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL), low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL), very low density lipoprotein cholesterol (VLDL), and the triglycerides. Lipids are used to transport some vitamins and are an energy source. Some lipids enter the body through what we eat. Some are created within the body itself.



Why are blood lipids important?



High levels of blood lipids increase the risk of developing both heart disease and stroke, the greatest medical killers in the civilized world. Lowering blood lipid levels has been shown to reduce the risk. To remain healthy, it is important to keep your blood lipid levels normal or slightly below normal.

How can blood lipids be managed?

Proper management of your lipids requires knowing something about diet and nutrition. We eat to give our bodies energy. That energy comes from sugars, proteins, and fat. The energy is measured in calories. Too many calories cause weight gain; too few means weight loss. A proper proportion of sugar, fat, and proteins helps assure normal blood lipids. Modern food labels now list fat, sugar, cholesterol, and protein proportions. This makes it easier to follow dietary recommendations.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (240ml)	
Calories 200	
Amount Per Serving	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 10g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	10%
Cholesterol 30mg	6%
Sodium 10mg	2%
Total Carbohydrate 20g	4%
Dietary Fiber 5g	10%
Protein 5g	10%
Vitamin A	2%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	2%
Iron	2%



Your doctor will give you guidelines for what to eat and what to avoid. In general, you will want to eat foods low in cholesterol and reduce your total fat intake. High levels of cholesterol are found in eggs, dairy products, and red meats. Your doctor may also ask you to eat fewer calories. Reducing fat, cholesterol, and calories in your diet can often lower blood

lipid levels. Some forms of blood lipids, like triglycerides, are increased by drinking alcohol.

What are the general recommendations regarding blood lipids?

Anyone at risk for heart disease (people who have a family history of heart disease, have smoked regularly, or are elderly) should have his or her total cholesterol and HDL measured. Your doctor may also want to measure your blood triglyceride level, if he or she suspects you may have heart disease. Triglycerides normally serve as an energy source but, if they are too high, increase the risk of heart attacks, and a serious inflammatory disease of the pancreas.



How are elevated blood lipids treated?

The simplest way to lower your blood lipid level is through proper diet. Your doctor or your local Heart Association can offer help. Both the American Heart Association and the National Cholesterol Education Project recommend daily cholesterol intakes of less than 300 milligrams (not very much) per day. Both recommend limiting daily fat intake to amounts that make up less than 30% of the total calories eaten. For people with heart disease, stricter guidelines may be necessary.



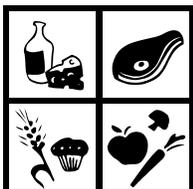
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When changes in diet alone do not bring lipid levels down, there are some very effective medicines. Among the common drugs used are cholestyramine, niacin, gemfibrozil, atorvastatin, fluvastatin, lovastatin, pravastatin, and simvastatin. Each has slightly different effects on the various blood lipids. Your doctor will choose the best one for you.



Are there side effects or risks in treatment of blood lipids?

Not only can all drugs have side effects, but many medications are very expensive. If your doctor recommends doing so, try to manage your blood lipid level by first changing your eating habits. It does require care in the choice and preparation of the foods you eat, but it probably costs less than any other treatment. Avoid fad diets.





Do not take dietary supplements without your doctor's approval.

A common side effect of cholestyramine is constipation. Nicotinic acid can cause flushing of the skin and sweating. Gallstones are more common when gemfibrozil is used. Probuocol can cause liver problems. Lovastatin and drugs like it can cause liver problems and muscle weakness. If you are taking any of these drugs and have any of these symptoms, you should call your doctor promptly.



When combined with a proper diet, these medicines greatly reduce the risk of heart attack and strokes in people with high blood lipid levels.

Written by Donald L. Warkentin, M.D.

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