



## Take Charge and Get Active

### **Did you know your cholesterol level has a lot to do with your chances of having a heart attack or stroke?**

Controlling your cholesterol today will decrease your chances of a heart attack in the future. The higher your cholesterol level, the greater your risk of developing heart disease or having a heart attack. In fact, one million Americans have heart attacks and about half a million people die from heart disease each year.

### **HOW DOES CHOLESTEROL CAUSE HEART DISEASE?**

When there is too much cholesterol in your blood, it builds up in the walls of your blood vessels. They become narrowed or blocked, which decreases the blood supply. Blood carries oxygen to your heart – if the flow is slowed down, you may experience chest pain and if the blood supply is cut off by a blockage, you will have a heart attack. (A stroke, for example, is caused when a blood vessel in the brain is blocked.)

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIGH CHOLESTEROL?**

There are no symptoms of high cholesterol – many people do not realize their cholesterol is too high. That's why it is important to see your doctor and have a test called a fasting lipid profile.

### **WHAT IS A FASTING LIPID PROFILE?**

A fasting lipid profile is a blood test that is drawn after fasting (nothing to eat or drink, except water) for 9–12 hours. The test breaks down your cholesterol into the following forms:

- LDL (Bad) Cholesterol – the type of cholesterol that builds up and blocks arteries.
- HDL (Good) Cholesterol – keeps cholesterol from building up in the arteries.
- Triglycerides – a form of fat in your blood.
- Total Cholesterol – is based on your LDL (bad) cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol and triglycerides.

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY CHOLESTEROL AND DECREASE MY RISK OF HEART DISEASE?**

- A Heart Healthy Diet – reduce the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet.
- Physical Activity – be active for 30 minutes most days of the week. Physical activity helps lower LDL and raise HDL.
- Weight – maintain a healthy weight.
- Age, Gender and Heredity – you can't change these, but they can also affect cholesterol levels.
- Avoid tobacco smoke.

*Note: Always speak with your doctor prior to starting a diet or exercise program.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- A combination of dietary changes and exercise can help to lower cholesterol levels. In fact, eating a diet rich in high-fiber foods, fruits and vegetables, lean meats and poultry can actually lower your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Some people need medication in addition to diet and exercise to lower their cholesterol enough; the medication needs to be taken every day as prescribed in order to help prevent heart attacks and strokes.
- There are many products to help you remember to take your medication, such as pill boxes with an alarm or timer caps for pill bottles. You can also try setting your own alarm in your smart phone, or even using something as basic as a calendar to remind you to take your medicine.

## GOALS FOR CHOLESTEROL

**Total Cholesterol** less than **200 mg/dL**

**LDL Cholesterol** less than **100 mg/dL**

**HDL Cholesterol** greater than **40 mg/dL** for men, **50 mg/dL** for women

**Triglycerides** less than **150 mg/dL**

## LEARN MORE

### Independent Health

[independenthealth.com](http://independenthealth.com)

1-800-501-3439

### American Heart Association

[heart.org](http://heart.org)

1-800-242-8721

### My Life Check

[mylifecheck.heart.org](http://mylifecheck.heart.org)

### New York State Smokers' Quitline

[nysmokefree.com](http://nysmokefree.com)

1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)

## TOOLS & RESOURCES

From health tips and guidelines that help you stay informed, to useful online and mobile tools that help make it easier to manage your health, Independent Health has the tools and resources you need to lead a healthier life.

To learn more, visit the "Tools, Forms & More" section at [independenthealth.com](http://independenthealth.com).

