

Cholesterol...not just a number! *By Grace Yu, MD*

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatty substance that plays an important role in the body. However, too much cholesterol puts a person at risk for cardiovascular disease. When most people talk about high cholesterol, they mean elevated total cholesterol greater than 200. But the total cholesterol number does not tell the whole story. Cholesterol contains different particles. A standard cholesterol panel includes total cholesterol, low density lipoprotein (LDL), high density lipoprotein (HDL) and triglycerides. LDL is known as the “bad cholesterol” because elevated LDL increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. HDL is also called the “good cholesterol” because high levels of HDL decrease the risk of heart attack and stroke. Elevated triglycerides also put a person at risk for heart attack.

In general, a person should aim for total cholesterol < 200, HDL >60 and triglyceride <150.

According to the Third Report of the Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults (ATPIII), the treatment of high cholesterol is based on the LDL level and by the coexistence of coronary heart disease and the numbers of cardiac risk factors. For a person who already has coronary heart disease (CHD) or has CHD equivalents, the goal LDL should be less than 100. CHD equivalent is defined as a history of: diabetes, stroke, peripheral artery disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm.

Other major risk factors for CHD are: smoking, hypertension, a family history

of early heart attack, low HDL and age (men \geq 45, women \geq 55). The goal LDL is <160 if a person has 0 to 1 risk factor. If two or more risk factors are identified, the 10-year risk for CHD can be assessed by a risk calculator based on the Framingham Study. The goal LDL is <100 if the 10-year risk is >20 percent and <130 if 10-year risk is between 10-20 percent.

When a person has LDL above the recommended goal, lifestyle change is the first step toward treatment. Life style changes can consist of a diet low in cholesterol and fat, an increase in daily activity and weight loss. If the goal cannot be achieved after six months of lifestyle changes, then cholesterol lowering medication is considered.

Practice Hours by Location

Thunderbird Internal Medicine now has four locations, each with different hours based on the needs of our patients. Practice hours are as follows:

5620 W. Thunderbird Road, Glendale

Suite C1: Weekdays 7am - 5pm

Suite F1: Weekdays 6:30am - 6pm +

Same day scheduling for urgent visits:

- Monday/Tuesday/Thursday 6 - 8 pm & Saturday 8am - 1pm

Suite G2: Weekdays 8am - 5pm

9150 W. Indian School Road, Phoenix

Weekdays 8am - 5pm



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