

# **Cholesterol Fact Sheet For Media**

## **Quick Statistics**

### **Cholesterol – The Basics**

There are two types of cholesterol: “good” and “bad.” LDL cholesterol is the “bad” cholesterol. When too much of it circulates in the blood, it can clog arteries, increasing your risk of heart attack and stroke. HDL is the “good” cholesterol which helps keep the LDL (bad) cholesterol from getting lodged in your artery walls. A healthy level of HDL cholesterol may also protect against heart attack and stroke. LDL cholesterol is produced naturally by the body, but many people inherit genes that cause them to make too much. Eating saturated fat, trans fats and dietary cholesterol also increases LDL cholesterol.<sup>1</sup>

- The lipid profile includes: LDL or “bad” cholesterol; HDL or “good” cholesterol and triglycerides.<sup>2</sup>
- 102.2 million Americans age 20 and older have total blood cholesterol levels of 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) or higher:
  - 47.7 million men
  - 54.5 million women<sup>3</sup>
- High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke.<sup>4</sup>

### **Dyslipidemia**

- Dyslipidemia is one of the major modifiable risk factors for coronary heart disease (CHD).<sup>5</sup>
- Mixed dyslipidemia is elevated LDL cholesterol and/or triglyceride levels combined with low levels of HDL cholesterol.<sup>6</sup>

## **Lipids**

### **Total Cholesterol**

- In adults, total cholesterol levels of 240 mg/dL or higher are considered high risk. Levels from 200 to 239 mg/dL are considered borderline-high risk.<sup>7,8</sup>

### **LDL-C (Bad Cholesterol)**

- Levels of 130–159 mg/dL are considered borderline-high. Levels of 160–189 mg/dL are classified as high, and levels of 190 mg/dL and higher are very high.<sup>9,10</sup>
- For many people, LDL cholesterol at or above 130 mg/dL is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.<sup>11</sup>
- The mean level of LDL cholesterol for American adults age 20 and older is 115 mg/dL.<sup>12</sup>
- LDL cholesterol reduction is the primary goal of lipid-lowering therapy to reduce the risk of CHD.<sup>13,14</sup>

### **Triglycerides**

- A triglyceride level of more than 150 mg/dL in adults, considered borderline-high, is linked to heart disease and stroke in some people.<sup>15,16</sup>
- The mean triglyceride level for American adults age 18 and older is 144.2 mg/dL (men, 156.5 mg/dL; women, 132.1 mg/dL).<sup>17</sup>

### **HDL-C (Good Cholesterol)**

- Low levels of HDL (less than 40 mg/dL) also increase the risk of heart disease.<sup>18,19</sup>
- The mean level of HDL cholesterol for American adults age 20 and older is 54.3 mg/dL.<sup>20</sup>

## **High Cholesterol and Other Chronic Conditions**

- On average, a person with high cholesterol has 3.3 other chronic conditions.<sup>21</sup>
- One person in eight with a chronic condition has high cholesterol.<sup>22</sup>

- 
- <sup>1</sup> [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/About-Cholesterol\\_UCM\\_001220\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/About-Cholesterol_UCM_001220_Article.jsp)
- <sup>2</sup> LDL and HDL Cholesterol: What's Bad and What's Good? American Heart Association. 2010. Retrieved May 24, 2010, from <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=180>.
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1261004785748FS13CH10.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1502>
- <sup>5</sup> Harper CR, Jacobson TA. An evidence-based approach to the use of combination drug therapy for mixed dyslipidemia. *Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management*. 2006; 13(1): 57-68.
- <sup>6</sup> Manrique CM, Rosenzweig JL, Umpierrez GE. Diabetes, Dyslipidemia, and Heart Protection. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. 2009; 94. Retrieved May 25, 2010, from <http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/reprint/94/1/0>.
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1260903837450FS04BBM10.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> National cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Third report of the national cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) final report. *Circulation*. 2002; 106:3142-3421.
- <sup>9</sup> Cholesterol Statistics. Retrieved June 17, 2010 <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=536>
- <sup>10</sup> National cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Third report of the national cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) final report. *Circulation*. 2002; 106:3142-3421.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> American Heart Association. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics — 2010 Update. Dallas, Texas: American Heart Association; 2008. p. 25 ([http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS\\_Stats%202008.final.pdf](http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS_Stats%202008.final.pdf))
- <sup>13</sup> National cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Third report of the national cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) final report. *Circulation*. 2002; 106:3142-3421.
- <sup>14</sup> Implications of Recent Clinical Trials for the National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III Guidelines. (ATP III Update 2004). *Circulation*. 2004;110:227-239.
- <sup>15</sup> National cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Third report of the national cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) final report. *Circulation*. 2002; 106:3142-3421.
- <sup>16</sup> Triglycerides. Retrieved June 17, 2010 from [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Triglycerides\\_UCM\\_306029\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Triglycerides_UCM_306029_Article.jsp)
- <sup>17</sup> American Heart Association. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics — 2010 Update. Dallas, Texas: American Heart Association; 2008. p. 25 ([http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS\\_Stats%202008.final.pdf](http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS_Stats%202008.final.pdf))
- <sup>18</sup> National cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III). Third report of the national cholesterol education program (NCEP) expert panel on detection, evaluation, and treatment of high blood cholesterol in adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) final report. *Circulation*. 2002; 106:3142-3421.
- <sup>19</sup> Good vs. Bad Cholesterol. Retrieved June 17, 2010 from [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/Good-vs-Bad-Cholesterol\\_UCM\\_305561\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/AboutCholesterol/Good-vs-Bad-Cholesterol_UCM_305561_Article.jsp).
- <sup>20</sup> American Heart Association. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics — 2010 Update. Dallas, Texas: American Heart Association; 2008. p. 25 ([http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS\\_Stats%202008.final.pdf](http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1200078608862HS_Stats%202008.final.pdf))
- <sup>21</sup> [http://www.partnershipforsolutions.org/statistics/issue\\_briefs.html](http://www.partnershipforsolutions.org/statistics/issue_briefs.html)
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid