

# ***Heart Health Tips***

## **Knowing the “Good” & “Bad” About Cholesterol Can Help Keep Women Heart-Healthy**

(NAPSA)—Heart disease is the number one killer in the United States, claiming the lives of approximately 500,000 women each year. It is estimated that one in two women will eventually die of heart disease or stroke, compared with one in 25 women who will die of breast cancer.

New American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines recommend higher levels of HDL cholesterol or “good cholesterol” in women to protect against heart disease.

If you are like most health-conscious women, you probably know your total cholesterol number. Total cholesterol is made up of LDL cholesterol or “bad cholesterol,” and HDL cholesterol, or “good cholesterol”—and it is important that people, especially women, know both numbers.

Too much LDL cholesterol can cause plaque to form on the walls of the arteries and lead to blood clots, heart attack and stroke. HDL protects the heart by clearing excess cholesterol away from the arteries.

During the past decade, the medical community focused mainly on lowering LDL cholesterol to

### **What Do Women Need To Know About “Good” and “Bad” Cholesterol?**

- HDL cholesterol levels should be at least 50 mg/dL
- Along with diet & exercise, prescription niacin can help to raise HDL, or “good”, cholesterol levels
- LDL cholesterol levels should be less than 100 mg/dL
- In combination with diet & exercise, taking a statin can help to lower LDL, or “bad”, cholesterol levels



reduce the risk of heart disease. Lowering levels of LDL cholesterol alone, however, fails to prevent 60 to 70 percent of heart attacks and deaths related to heart disease, according to clinical studies. Increasing levels of “good cholesterol” is emerging as an important part of managing heart disease.

“Women need to pay particularly close attention to their HDL cholesterol levels,” said Dr. Emma Meagher, Associate Director of the Cardiovascular Risk Intervention Program at the University of Pennsylvania. “As they age, meno-

pause brings with it changes that can cause a dramatic decrease in HDL cholesterol, putting women at greater risk for cardiovascular disease.”

In one study, women with low HDL cholesterol—less than 46 mg/dL—were six times as likely to have a heart attack as those with high HDL cholesterol of more than 67 mg/dL.

The AHA’s new guidelines encourage women to maintain HDL cholesterol levels above 50 mg/dL, a 25 percent increase over past recommendations.

According to Dr. Meagher, reaching optimal levels of HDL and LDL cholesterol requires a multi-step approach. Along with a healthy diet and regular exercise, women who have difficulty increasing their HDL cholesterol should ask their doctor about prescription niacin, a therapy that can significantly raise good cholesterol. In addition, statins are highly effective at reducing LDL cholesterol levels.

To learn more about heart health, women should talk to their doctor or visit [www.americanheart.org/heartprofilers](http://www.americanheart.org/heartprofilers).