



HEART HEALTH

Study Finds Decline In Cholesterol Levels

(NAPSA)—There's good news about bad cholesterol that many Americans can take to heart. A study has identified what's been described as a significant and steady decline of approximately 10 percent over a four-year period in average LDL (low-density lipoprotein) or "bad" cholesterol levels. The data is based on blood tests ordered on behalf of patients under a physician's care in the United States. The decline, however, was slower in women than in men.

Lowering LDL cholesterol can decrease the risk of arteriosclerosis and heart attack. The average serum LDL cholesterol level declined from 123.7 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) at the beginning of 2001 to 111.7 mg/dL at the end of 2004. The recommended upper limit of LDL cholesterol for people at average risk for heart disease is 130 mg/dL, according to the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP).

The findings are contained in a report released as the first in a series of Quest Diagnostics Health Trends, a new indicator of patient health based on de-identified patient-testing data in the nation's largest private database of clinical test results.

The Heart Health Report is said to be the first assessment of its kind to involve so many people. It was designed to provide up-to-date information on national LDL cholesterol trends for people who visit the doctor.

"The 10 percent decline we saw in average LDL cholesterol levels between 2001 and 2004 is a steeper decrease than reported in

LDL Cholesterol Levels, 2001-2004



In a study, average levels of "bad" cholesterol declined in adults who visit the doctor.

a published U.S. population study, and these data are very current," said Joyce G. Schwartz, M.D., Vice President and Chief Laboratory Officer for Quest Diagnostics. "In addition, women showed higher average LDL cholesterol levels than men, and their results declined less than the men's."

"The Quest Diagnostics study shows that cholesterol is decreasing in Americans who see their doctors and have their cholesterol measured, and this is very important for public health," said Frank M. Sacks, M.D., Professor of Cardiovascular Disease Prevention at Harvard School of Public Health. "I would expect that these patients have an improved quality of life because lower cholesterol means fewer heart attacks and other cardiovascular events."

For the Heart Health Report, Quest Diagnostics conducted a retrospective analysis of data from nearly 80 million LDL cholesterol results reported by its laboratories across the U.S. from 2001 through 2004 for adult patients age 20 years and older.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.questdiagnostics.com.