

YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Tips On Managing Good Cholesterol Ⓢ

(NAPSA)—When it comes to managing your cholesterol, low isn't always the goal. Higher levels of “good,” or HDL (high-density lipoprotein), cholesterol may help protect against heart disease, while having low levels (less than 40 mg/dL) may increase the risk.

Medical experts think HDL carries cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it's passed from the body and protects from heart disease. Some experts believe that HDL removes excess cholesterol from arterial plaque, slowing its buildup.

Dr. Richard Karas, Director of Preventive Cardiology and Co-Director of the Women's Heart Center at Tufts Medical Center, says women in particular need to pay attention to HDL levels as it's typically 10 points higher in women than in men. Furthermore, low HDL is a more significant risk factor for heart disease than high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol in women.

Although women may not be diagnosed as aggressively as men, more women die of heart disease each year. In fact, in the U.S., heart disease is the leading cause of death in women and 38.2 million women (34 percent) are living with the disease. The population at risk is even larger.

Fortunately, even small changes to daily habits can help both men and women increase their HDL. Here are some tips:

•**Aerobic exercise.** Regular

exercise that raises your heart rate (walking, jogging or bike riding) is one of the most effective ways to increase HDL levels.

•**Lose weight.** Obesity can both increase LDL and lower HDL cholesterol. If you're overweight, losing even a few pounds can improve your HDL.

•**Stop smoking.** Giving up tobacco can increase your HDL cholesterol by up to 10 percent.

•**Eliminate trans-fatty acids.** Trans-fatty acids are present in many prepared foods—anything with “partially hydrogenated vegetable oils” on the nutrition label. Removing them from your diet, while not easy, will almost certainly raise HDL.

•**Increase monounsaturated fats.** Monounsaturated fats—such as canola oil, avocado oil and olive oil, and fats found in peanut butter—can increase HDL without increasing your total cholesterol.

•**Moderate alcohol consumption.** While excessive alcohol puts you at increased risk for heart disease, moderate alcohol consumption can actually increase HDL a small amount.

If your HDL level remains low despite diet and exercise changes, there are prescription medicines that may help. People with cholesterol issues should speak with their physician about treatment options.

You can learn more about cholesterol management at www.GetTheCholesterolFacts.com.