

Low HDL (High Density Lipoprotein)

Many things affect your child's chances of having heart and blood vessel disease as an adult. Some of these risk factors, such as family history, age, and sex, cannot be changed. Some of the risk factors **can** be changed, such as:

- Unhealthy weight
- Tobacco use and second-hand exposure
- High blood pressure
- Low HDL cholesterol

Cholesterol build-up can start in children as young as 2 years of age. By making wise food and lifestyle choices now, your child can lower the risk of many health problems when they are older. These health problems include:

- A **stroke** caused by blocked arteries that lead to the brain.
- A **heart attack** caused by blocked arteries around the heart.
- **Peripheral vascular disease** caused by blocked arteries in the legs.

Cholesterol is found in all cells. It is needed for many body functions. Two types of cholesterol are HDL and LDL. HDL is the "happy" or "good" cholesterol that removes LDL (the "lousy" or "bad") cholesterol from the bloodstream.

If HDL is low, below 45 mg/dL in children, it is a risk factor for heart disease, even if your total cholesterol is less than 200 mg/dL. You have a lower risk for getting coronary heart disease if your HDL is high.

To Increase HDL "Healthy" Levels

- Be active daily.
- Avoid tobacco use (smoking, chewing tobacco), and second-hand exposure.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat foods with heart healthy fats.
- Decrease triglycerides. Limit your intake of white bread, pasta, rice, sweet drinks and treats.

Heart Healthy Fats

Heart Healthy fats like monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats can be found in olive oil, avocado oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, nuts, seeds, avocado, olives, and fatty fish. These fats can help to improve cholesterol levels in the blood.

Omega-3 fat is a very heart healthy type of fat found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, and sardines. Some plant foods, such as flaxseed, walnuts and canola oil also contain a form of omega-3 fat. Omega-3 fat can help lower triglycerides levels and raise HDL levels. It can also make blood cells less sticky and decrease inflammation in the blood vessel wall.

Increase Omega-3 Intake

- Eat fish at least 2 to 3 times per week.
- Enjoy walnuts as a snack or add chia seeds or ground flaxseed to cereal, yogurt, or smoothies.
- Your child's health care team may suggest fish oil supplements.

Other Ways to Increase HDL

- **Stay active.** Physical activity raises HDL and lowers triglycerides. It can also help with weight control. Aim for 60 minutes of active play or aerobic movement daily. This includes jogging, walking, biking, dancing, and swimming.
- **Limit screen time.** Limit screen time to no more than 1-2 hours daily for all children over 2 years of age. (Less than 1 hour per day for children under 2) Screen time includes phone, tablets, computers, video games and TV.

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH)
(608) 890-5500

You can also visit our website at:

www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#600