

## WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a substance produced in the liver which is needed to form cell membranes, nerve coatings and certain hormones. Our bodies usually produce enough natural cholesterol to take care of these needs. We also get cholesterol from the foods we eat, such as meats, egg yolks and whole dairy products.

The higher your blood cholesterol is the greater your risk of developing coronary artery disease. Components of blood cholesterol (Lipids) that need to be watched and their normal values are:

- *Total blood cholesterol:*  
Less than 200 mg/dl
- *HDL (good) cholesterol:*  
45 or more mg/dl
- *LDL (bad) cholesterol:*  
100 mg/dl or less
- *Triglycerides:*  
Less than 200 mg/dl

Low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, increased exercise and activity, weight loss and medications are often prescribed to improve cholesterol levels.

## Common Medications Used To Control Cholesterol

- ATORVASTATIN (LIPITOR)
  - FLUVASTATIN (LESCOL)
  - LOVASTATIN (MEVACOR)
  - PRAVASTATIN (PRAVACHOL)
  - SIMVASTATIN (ZOCOR)
- \* GEMFIBROZIL (LOPID)
- \* CHOLESTYRAMINE (QUESTRAN)
- \* Used to lower triglycerides.

## Lab Schedule For Cholesterol Medications Per FDA Guidelines:

- 1) After starting the cholesterol medication, have your blood checked in 4 weeks.
- 2) You do not need an appointment for lab work in our office. Come to the office after 08:30 to have your blood drawn. Fasting (nothing to eat or drink except water) is preferable but not absolutely necessary.
- 3) After your blood tests return, ask when you should have your blood rechecked again. This is usually 8 weeks after the first blood test, unless we tell you differently.
- 4) Have your blood tested for cholesterol (lipids panel) and a comprehensive

metabolic screen (for liver function tests) every 6 months after your cholesterol medication has been adjusted. This schedule continues indefinitely.

- 5) If you have your blood tested outside of our office, have the lab fax the results to (406) 449-2916. Also, leave a number where we can reach you in case we need to give you further instructions.
- 6) If you have any questions about your cholesterol levels (lipids) or when you are due for additional lab work, feel free to call our office at (406) 449-7943.

## Adverse Side Effects To Be Aware Of:

- Muscle aches and weakness
- Fatigue
- Abdominal pain, constipation, diarrhea, flatulence (gas).
- Headache
- Liver functions may be affected, thus the reason for follow up blood tests, as recommended.

## Starting A New Cholesterol-Lowering Medication:

- 1) Start \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ mg once daily at bedtime. Have your blood tested in 4-6 weeks for cholesterol levels and liver function tests.
- 2) Your next *fasting* blood test is due the week of \_\_\_\_\_. Please come to the office for the blood test *BEFORE* you run out of cholesterol medicine.
- 3) After we receive the results of your blood tests, we will tell you if you need to increase the dose of your medication or leave it the same. We will also tell you when to have you blood tested again.
- 3) Monitor for any adverse reactions such as muscle weakness, fatigue, headache, abdominal pain, constipation, diarrhea or flatulence.
- 4) Notify the office if you feel that you are experiencing any of these symptoms. The Clinic's number is (406) 449-7943.
- 5) Before you run out of samples or a prescription, please call the office and ask if you are to continue the medication and for how long.



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**Visit our web site at  
[www.helenacardiology.com](http://www.helenacardiology.com)**



**YOUR  
CHOLESTEROL  
AND THE  
MEDICATIONS  
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