

Know Your Cholesterol Numbers... Know Your Risk

(NAPSA)—How do your cholesterol numbers measure up? Your numbers are crucial for knowing your chance of having a heart attack. In September, National Cholesterol Education Month, have your cholesterol checked. Then, find out your risk for heart disease—and how to lower it.

1. Know your cholesterol numbers. A fasting lipoprotein profile measures total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, and triglyceride levels. Everyone age 20 or older should have this blood test at least once every five years.

2. Know your risk for coronary heart disease (CHD). How likely are you to develop heart disease or have a heart attack? People with CHD or diabetes are at the greatest risk for a heart attack. Others can look at their LDL (“bad”) cholesterol level and other risk factors for CHD to evaluate their CHD risk. Cholesterol-lowering treatment primarily aims to lower the level of LDL, the main source of blockage in the arteries. The higher the CHD risk, the lower the LDL treatment goal (see table). The factors (other than LDL) that affect this goal are: cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL (“good”) cholesterol, family history of early heart disease, and older age.

If you have two or more of the above risk factors (other than a high LDL), estimating your risk for having a heart attack in the next 10 years is recommended, according to the latest national guidelines. A risk score over 20 percent

LDL Cholesterol Goals Based on Risk Categories	
Risk Category	LDL Goal
CHD and CHD Risk Equivalents (10-year risk over 20%)	Less than 100 mg/dL
2+ Risk Factors* (10-year risk up to 20%)	Less than 130 mg/dL
0-1 Risk Factor*	Less than 160 mg/dL 

(* other than LDL)

is considered as high a risk as having CHD (“CHD equivalent”). Find out your risk score with an online calculator from the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP), a public health initiative of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Go to www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol and click on Patients.

3. Reach your goal. Many people can reach their LDL goal through therapeutic lifestyle changes, such as improving their diet, physical activity level, and weight management. Some, however, will also need medication.

In addition, people with metabolic syndrome—a cluster of risk factors such as obesity, high triglyceride levels, and a low HDL level—may need additional treatment after reaching their LDL treatment goal.

For more information, visit the NCEP Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd or contact the NHLBI Health Information Center at (301) 592-8573.