



NAPEBT

HEALTH REPORT

WINTER 2011-2012



What's Your Cholesterol Trying to Tell You?

Make the right changes to improve your health.

When it comes to your health, cholesterol levels reveal a great deal. Your total cholesterol levels—including LDL (bad), HDL (good) and triglycerides—can indicate whether you have an increased risk for heart disease. And once you know that, you can make the right changes to improve your health.

A blood test is how you can get screened for risky cholesterol counts. Starting at age 20, you should get tested every five years. If you have other health issues—like a family history of heart disease—your doctor may suggest screenings more frequently.

The results of your blood test will show four categories:

- **LDL cholesterol:** This is considered “bad” cholesterol, and you want this number low—preferably less than 100.

- **HDL cholesterol:** You want this “good” cholesterol to be at 60 or higher. The higher the number, the better it is for your heart.

- **Triglycerides:** Lower than 150 is the best result here.

- **Total blood (or serum) cholesterol:** Your risk for heart disease is lower if this number is under 200 overall.

Your doctor should explain what your numbers indicate and how to improve your cholesterol. Eating fewer carbs, exercising regularly, quitting smoking and limiting alcohol consumption are good steps to better heart health. You'll also want to eat more fruits, vegetables and fiber. If lifestyle improvements don't help, your doctor may prescribe a medication. Genetics can also play a role in heart disease, so ask your doctor about the right plan for you.

FIGHT FLU THIS SEASON

Stay one step ahead of the flu this season by following these four steps:

- 1 GET YOUR FLU VACCINE.** No, it's not too late! Flu season hits its peak in February, so there's still time to protect yourself. It's generally recommended that everyone over age six months gets a flu shot. The flu shot is especially important for people with chronic conditions.
- 2 LEARN THE SIGNS.** Flu symptoms include headache, muscle aches, chills, a cough, congestion and exhaustion. Unlike a cold, the flu comes on suddenly and is typically accompanied by a fever. Feelings of fatigue are common with the flu and may last for weeks.
- 3 CHOOSE YOUR TREATMENT.** Use over-the-counter medications to relieve your symptoms, and get plenty of rest. If you experience difficulty breathing, dizziness, persistent vomiting or a sudden worsening of symptoms, make an appointment with your doctor or visit an urgent care facility.
- 4 KEEP IT TO YOURSELF.** If you think you have the flu, stay home to avoid infecting others.



Have a Happy, Healthy Holiday

Whether it's the food-filled holiday parties or your co-worker's endless supply of baked goods and candy—temptation is everywhere this time of year. Here's a surprising tip that might just get you through the season without piling on the pounds: It's OK to indulge a little. Just enjoy in moderation.

Before heading to a party, eat a light snack so that you aren't ravenous when you arrive. This will stop you from eating everything in sight. Be strategic about your party snacks: Choose mostly lower-fat options, but allow yourself one special treat. Fill up on water or seltzer, and limit yourself to only one alcoholic beverage if you drink.

To avoid temptations, the best strategy is probably avoidance. Just walk on by that candy dish or dessert tray at a work or family gathering! Or just choose one—maybe a small piece of dark chocolate or one cookie. (And if you bake a special treat, look for low-fat ingredient substitutes online, like unsweetened applesauce in place of butter. See page 4 for a healthy recipe, too.)

USE YOUR WORDS: How to Describe Your Pain

It's not just how much it hurts.

Have you ever had to describe pain to your doctor using a scale from 1 to 10? It's hard, right? Well, that's because nobody experiences pain the same way.

Understanding how to talk about your pain will help you get the best treatment. Consider the following questions next time you visit your doctor.

Where is the pain? Be specific. For example, don't just say "my arm" if it's actually your elbow that hurts. Also, explain if the pain seems to have a center point or if it spreads out.

Can you describe how it hurts? Words like "sharp," "dull" or "burning"

might help here. Imagine you have to draw a picture of the pain. Be creative and descriptive to help your doctor diagnose you. Does it feel like you're being stabbed with a sword? Or is the pain like a vice grip?

What makes it worse? Again, go into detail. Is it worse in the morning or at night? Does the pain increase when you move a certain way?

What makes it better? Does sitting down help it hurt less? Explain how the pain responds to painkillers. Does it go away completely? If so, for how long? Be sure to mention if you've tried any alternative medication.

3 Tips to Reduce Kids' Screen Time

We all spend a good chunk of our daily lives in front of a computer or TV screen, especially during winter months when it's tough to get outside. But everyone, especially kids, should limit their screen time so they can focus on other activities. Here are a few tips.

SET LIMITS. Establish how many hours your kids are allowed to use the computer or TV. Two hours per day is a good guideline. Also, try not to make screen time part of a reward or punishment—this approach can make it seem more important to kids.

START TALKING. Discuss why you're setting these limits—and how you feel they will improve your family's health during the winter months. Explain to your kids that you'll follow the same rules, so you're all in it together.

GET CREATIVE. Sit down with your kids and make a list of other activities to prevent winter boredom. Sign them up for sports lessons on the weekends so they'll be ready and eager to get outside when the weather warms up. Or, go ice skating, bowling or skiing. You can also encourage them to use their imagination for arts and crafts or even pick out a few board games that the whole family can play.






Safe Travels

Perhaps you're planning your dream vacation or traveling for the holidays. No matter where you're heading or how many miles away, a few simple precautions can help you avoid any unfortunate detours and keep you and your family safe.

Pack smart. Place a photocopy of your passport in each piece of luggage, in case the original is lost. Prepare a travel health kit with your prescription medications and basic first aid items like bandages and antiseptic cream. Also, don't forget your health insurance card and information about coverage where you're going.

Study up. Check for travel warnings and alerts on www.travel.state.gov in the U.S. or www.voyage.gc.ca for Canada. Also check online for entry and exit requirements and review local customs and laws if you're traveling outside the country. If you're considering renting a car, confirm which side of the road you'll be driving on and whether you should prepare for special road conditions.

Speak up. Talk with your doctor about your trip, and ask about preventive health measures like vaccines. Let a family member or friend know you will be traveling and provide him or her with your full itinerary and contact info. U.S. citizens should register with the Department of State, and Canadians should register with Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada so a consular officer can contact and assist you in an emergency.

For more tips, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/travel. For Canada-specific information, visit www.voyage.gc.ca. 

Are You Anemic?

Anemia is one of the most common blood disorders. While more likely to affect women, iron deficiency can still cause major health problems for men.

Dizziness, fatigue, chest pain, headaches, trouble breathing during exercise, pale skin. Are these symptoms you're experiencing? It may be time to visit your doctor. These are the most common signs of anemia, a condition where your body doesn't make enough red blood cells. This can lead to your body not getting enough oxygen and cause an iron deficiency.

There are many causes of anemia—including genetics, certain chronic diseases or dietary habits. While more common in women who may develop anemia during pregnancy or experience it during heavy menstrual periods, iron deficiency can also cause troubling symptoms in men such as chest pain and shortness of breath. Some types of medication or surgery also bring on anemia.

To check for anemia, your doctor will listen to your heart, examine your overall health and test your blood. Depending on the type of anemia, treatments range from supplements to blood transfusions.

Obesity: A Universal Problem

Last summer, the medical journal *The Lancet* reported some alarming statistics about obesity. Currently about one in 10 of the world's adults are obese, with the U.S. and the U.K. having some of the highest rates of obesity in the world. In fact, about one-third of Americans are obese, a trend that's expected to worsen in

the coming decades.

This weight gain translates into more obesity-related conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. These are costly conditions to treat, leading to ever-increasing health care costs.

A separate study found that the obesity rate in Canada is much less than the U.S., though about

a quarter of the population is overweight.

Now for some good news: If we all lost a few pounds, we could put a dent in these numbers. *The Lancet* estimates that if the U.S. population lowered its collective body mass index (BMI) by one percent, two million cases of diabetes could be prevented.



Apple Dumplings

180
CALORIES

1g
TOTAL FAT

190mg
SODIUM

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 6 small apples, peeled and cored
- 6 square 7-inch egg roll wrappers
- Non-stick cooking spray

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Spray six muffin cups with non-stick spray. In a large bowl, combine sugar, cinnamon, cornstarch, vanilla and 1 Tbsp. water. Roll peeled apples in the mixture until coated. Place one apple in the center of each egg roll wrapper. Bring the corners to the top of the apple, pressing and folding to seal edges. Place each dumpling in a muffin cup and lightly spray the tops with the cooking spray. Bake until golden brown (about 20 minutes). Let cool and serve warm.
Servings: 6

Sweet Nothings For Holiday Gatherings

Who says desserts are off limits if you're watching your weight? There are actually tricks for enjoying sweet treats without feeling an ounce of guilt.

For starters: Be an informed diner. Know what you're eating. You may be pleasantly surprised to discover that dessert may not be as bad as you think. Next, limit yourself. Take half a piece—or share one serving. Avoid the extras—like that scoop of ice cream or spoonful of whipped cream. Also, don't forget that drinks carry calories, too. Rather than having that cappuccino, opt for espresso with no sugar instead.

If you're the one baking, sample some healthier options, like this recipe for apple dumplings.

Get more recipes at www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

This *Health Report* is being provided to you by the Northern Arizona Public Employers Benefit Trust and will be posted quarterly to our website. Its purpose is to keep you informed about current health and wellness topics that will help you and your family maintain good health and live healthy lifestyles.

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