

# a woman's heart

FEBRUARY 2006

A newsletter for women taking care of their hearts



## Cholesterol Demystified

### Q. I NEED HELP UNDERSTANDING MY CHOLESTEROL SCORES. WHAT ARE LDL, HDL, AND TRIGLYCERIDES?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance found in every cell in your body. Your body needs cholesterol to function. You get cholesterol from two sources: your body, which manufactures its own cholesterol, and the food you eat. Your body typically makes about 80 percent of the cholesterol it needs and counts on the food you eat for the remaining 20 percent.



A Q&A with cardiac nurse and A Woman's Heart coordinator, Kerry Rayder, RN

In your liver, cholesterol attaches to protein packages called lipoproteins, which then circulate in your bloodstream. LDL—or low-density lipoprotein—is also known as “bad” cholesterol. It tends to deposit cholesterol in the walls of your arteries. HDL—or high-

density lipoprotein—is the “good” cholesterol. It removes excess cholesterol from your blood.

Triglycerides are another type of lipid, or fat, circulating in your bloodstream, and, like LDL, can also raise heart disease risk.

### Q. WHEN I ADD TOGETHER MY LDL AND HDL NUMBERS, THEY DON'T ADD UP TO MY TOTAL CHOLESTEROL NUMBER. WHY?

Good question! Your Total Cholesterol is your LDL plus your HDL plus 20 percent of your triglyceride level.

### Q. IF MY TOTAL CHOLESTEROL IS BELOW 200, I'M FINE, RIGHT?

It's important to know your Total Cholesterol, but keep in mind that one of the numbers comprising your Total Cholesterol is your HDL, which is a good

fat, and should be as high as possible. So really, it's most important to know and understand your LDL, HDL and triglyceride numbers separately. Also, optimum cholesterol levels for you depend on your unique heart health risk factors. Those at higher risk for heart disease need to have lower LDL and triglycerides than someone who's not at increased risk.

### Q. HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE MY CHOLESTEROL MEASURED?

We recommend that you have your cholesterol checked once a year—more often if your bad lipids are high, your HDL is very low, and/or you have significant cardiac risk factors such as an early family history of heart disease, diabetes, smoking or are overweight or inactive.

We do cholesterol testing and counseling as part of A Woman's Heart. Your first visit, which includes a review of all your risk factors, costs \$45, and all follow-up visits cost just \$35.

### Q. WHAT CAN I DO TO GET MY CHOLESTEROL NUMBERS WHERE THEY NEED TO BE?

A heart-healthy diet and regular exercise can make a huge improvement. For example, getting the recommended 25-35 grams of fiber each day helps remove cholesterol from your digestive system. Eating good fats such as avocados and walnuts also makes a difference. I often suggest that patients have a brief consultation with our dietician, Jenifer, to go over heart-healthy choices. Exerting yourself for at least 30 minutes every day is also important. Brisk walking is great, but many other activities work, too—as long as you're slightly breathless your heart is working hard enough.

Come visit me and together we'll make an achievable plan to control your

cholesterol. I've consulted with many women who, after our visit, began making positive changes. Six months later they were often fitter, leaner and had more energy—and their cholesterol numbers improved. It's so gratifying!

GENERAL CHOLESTEROL GUIDELINES				
	Optimal	Borderline High Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
Total	Below 200	200-239	≥240	
LDL (bad)*	Below 100	100-129	130-159	160 and above
HDL (good)	≥60	51-59	41-50	≤40
Triglycerides	≤150	151-199	200-499	500 and above

\*Your cholesterol goal actually depends on how many other factors put you at risk for heart disease and stroke; your healthcare provider can tell you your goal.

## Know Your Numbers!

### They are the key to your heart health.

by Dr. Roger Ashmore,  
Heart Center of the Rockies

When it comes to your heart health, numbers count. The enclosed card contains standard ranges of measurements for cholesterol, blood pressure, weight and waist circumference—all of which play a role in keeping your heart in tip-top shape. By knowing where your numbers are and where they should be, you'll be more prepared to meet your goals!



## Indoors or Out

### KEEP ON EXERCISING THROUGH THE WINTER

Keep up your fitness levels throughout the winter and you'll be ready for your favorite spring and summer activities!

#### STAY MOTIVATED

Besides keeping you fit, exercise can improve your mood, boost your energy and help you sleep better. Try to set aside 30 minutes each day for an activity you enjoy that gets your heart pumping. If you're slightly breathless while you're doing it, you're working hard enough to exercise your heart. And it doesn't have to be 30 minutes all in one stretch. You can do 10 minutes here of one activity and 20 minutes there of another. Work out with a spouse or friend to help you stay motivated.

#### INDOORS WHEN IT'S COLD, ICY OR DARK

When the weather's too nasty to go outside, exercise indoors. Walk at the mall or join a health club. Take advantage of our great local community swimming pools. You can also buy some simple equipment for your home, such as an exercise video or a stationary bike. Plan your workout around your favorite TV show and entertain your brain while you're working your body.

#### OUTDOORS WHEN YOU CAN

Layer clothing to keep warm. A thin layer of synthetic exercise wear next to your skin wicks away sweat. Avoid cotton, which absorbs and traps moisture. The next layer should provide insulation. Many people like fleece, which is lightweight and quick-drying. If it's cold out, you'll also need a third layer that's as windproof and waterproof if possible. Wear gloves or mittens and wool or polypropylene socks. And don't forget to cover your head and ears! And if the weather dips below zero or the wind chill is below minus 20°F, exercise indoors.

Don't forget—when you're exercising, you need to drink just as much water in cold weather as you do during the summer. It's easy to become dehydrated in winter, and dehydration can make you feel lousy as well as increase your risk of frostbite.



## Heartwise Tidbits

### February is Heart Month!

Since 1964, February has been designated American Heart Month by Congress and the President. And February 3rd is "National Wear Red Day" in tribute to the ongoing battle against cardiovascular disease. So on Friday, February 3rd, dress in red—and remind those you care about to take care of their hearts.

### From Heart Center of the Rockies' Research Department:

Did you know that one if five Americans has metabolic syndrome? Metabolic syndrome is a collection of health risks that together increase your chance of developing heart disease, stroke and diabetes. For women, these health risk include having:

- a 35-inch or larger waist
- blood pressure higher than 130/85
- triglyceride levels higher than 150 mg/dL
- low HDL
- fasting blood glucose greater than 100 mg/dL

Our research department is conducting metabolic syndrome studies this spring. If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact Michelle at (970) 297-6812.

### A Run with Heart

The 2006 Sweetheart Run will be held Saturday, February 11th at 9:00 a.m. at Loveland High School. This is a four-mile course and participants may run or walk. To register, visit [lovelandroadrunners.com](http://lovelandroadrunners.com) or call Rick at (970) 290-8364.

*a woman's heart*

SPECIALIZED CARE FROM HEART CENTER OF THE ROCKIES  
Affiliated with Poudre Valley Health System

2121 E. Harmony, Suite 200  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80528  
(970) 297-6990