Cholesterol Fact Sheet

- Everyone has cholesterol in his or her body.
- Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in the blood and in all the body’s cells.
- High cholesterol is bad because it can build up with other substances in the inner walls of arteries. This buildup, called plaque, can narrow the blood flow, possibly leading to stroke and/or heart attack.

Individuals age 20 and older should have his or her cholesterol measured at least once every 5 years. It is best to have a blood test called a “lipoprotein profile.”

Desirable Cholesterol Levels:

- Total Cholesterol less than 200mg/dL
- LDL, (bad) Cholesterol less than 100mg/dL
- HDL (good) Cholesterol is 40mg/dL or above (men) and 50mg/dL or above (women).
- Triglycerides below 150 mg/dL.

What affects cholesterol level?

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors (things you can’t change)
- Age and Gender - As women age and begin menopause, their cholesterol levels rise.
- Heredity - High blood cholesterol can run in families.

Modifiable Risk Factors (things you can change)
- Diet - Saturated fat, the main culprit and cholesterol in the food you eat make your blood cholesterol level go up.
- Weight - Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease. It also tends to increase your cholesterol. Losing weight can help lower your Total, LDL and triglyceride cholesterol levels, while raising your HDL.
- Physical Activity - Being physically active can help lower your Total, LDL and triglyceride cholesterol levels, while raising your HDL.

Resources
- American Heart Association www.heart.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/heartdisease
- Go Red for Women www.goredforwomen.org
- Michigan Department of Community Health www.michigan.gov/cvh
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute www.nhlbi.nih.gov

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