

What if your LDL (Bad) Cholesterol is high or your HDL (Good) Cholesterol is low?

There's many ways to go about improving your cholesterol panel, and medication is not always where this story begins. The following are the most important areas to focus your attention to correct a high LDL or low HDL:

How to Increase HDL (Good Guys)	How to Decrease LDL (Bad Guys)
1. Exercise	1. Decrease saturated fat intake
2. Cessation of smoking	2. Maintain good body composition
3. Weight reduction	3. Increase dietary fiber (soluble)
	4. Increase aerobic exercise

Women in Michigan fare better, with 79.8% having had their cholesterol checked! Good job, women! That's encouraging, but it falls way short. It's recommended that the general population start checking cholesterol at age 20. In fact, 20% of *teenagers* have elevated cholesterol levels! Catching elevated cholesterol levels early creates an opportunity to slow the process of plaque formation. This minimizes atherosclerosis, and keeps those arteries open! Triglycerides (TG's) are also important, but 8x less predictive of heart disease versus HDL. If your triglycerides are greater than 150, discuss this with your physician.

Smoking - Smoking increases the bad cholesterol (LDL), and decreases the good cholesterol (HDL). In this way, smoking is doubly bad in how it affects the risk of heart disease and stroke in a person. The good news is that when a person quits smoking, a drop in bad cholesterol and increase in good cholesterol often occurs. Therefore, by quitting smoking, you would not only have better overall health, but also specifically decrease your risk of heart disease.

Weight management - If overweight, losing a few pounds can lower LDL. In fact, for every kilogram lost (2.2 pounds), LDL often drops by approximately 1%. (No medicine required!)

Physical activity - It's recommended that most people exercise aerobically at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Exercise alone often raises HDL to a level not possible

by diet alone. And the higher your HDL, the more protection you'll have against heart disease. So clear your exercise program with your doctor and get moving!!

Food Choice - If you're trying to get your cholesterol in order, it's suggested you keep your saturated fat intake to 7% or less. Soluble fiber can also help eliminate LDL cholesterol. Soluble fiber can be obtained naturally in fruits such as apples and pears, nuts, beans and oats.

Medications - There are numerous medications available to effectively improve your cholesterol panel. These are typically implemented IF lifestyle and diet changes do not significantly improve a patient's lipid numbers, OR if you have an associated condition that demands faster improvement to your lipid panel. I've lost count of the number of patients that feel that because they're on cholesterol medicine, they can eat whatever they want. Don't fall into this false way of thinking!

So know your numbers! If it's been awhile or if you've never checked it out, get to a doctor and look into this. Heart disease kills approximately 910,000 Americans every year (that's over 100 people every hour of every day)! Vascular disease is by far the number one cause of death in America, over and above all cancers. Don't make the mistake of turning a blind eye to this issue, as it could remove years from your life! Get yourself and your family together and request that your TOTAL LIPID PANELS be checked. In my

opinion, total cholesterol alone is insufficient - you need to know all the components (HDL, LDL and TG's) to make informed decisions.

Dr. Terry Matthews
Owner, Lansing Urgent Care
www.lansingurgentcare.com
admin@lansingurgentcare.com

About Dr. Terry Matthews

Dr. Terry Matthews graduated from MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine and pursued a career in Urgent Care and Family Practice. His passion for providing health care in an environment that is focused on the total patient experience coupled with his determination to provide the highest level of care in an urgent care setting is today known as Lansing Urgent Care. Dr. Matthews and his wife, Catherine, want to thank the Greater Lansing area for welcoming them and supporting their desire to provide a new level of Urgent Care to patients.

At a Glance:

- A total cholesterol over 220 is too high.
- An LDL of 100-129 is ideal.
- That HDL is most important in determining your risk of developing heart disease. An HDL of 60 or above is considered protective against heart disease.
- Smoking increases the bad cholesterol (LDL), and decreases the good cholesterol (HDL).