

People with heart disease still have trouble controlling blood lipid levels

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Despite some improvements to lower "bad" cholesterol levels, people with cardiovascular diseases still need to do a better job controlling overall blood lipid levels, according to a UC Irvine Heart Disease Prevention Program study.

Researchers found that 37 percent of Americans with diseases that affect the heart and vascular system had reached recommended levels of LDL-C (bad cholesterol), but only 17 percent were at recommended levels for all lipids – LDL-C, HDL-C ("good" cholesterol) and triglycerides. In contrast, 85 percent of those without cardiovascular diseases were at recommended LDL-C levels, while 67 percent were at recommended levels for all lipids.

The study reveals that many adults, particularly those with known cardiovascular diseases, inadequately control these key lipids. Proper diet, exercise, and more appropriate use of therapies to target all lipids are needed, especially for those most at risk, said Nathan D. Wong, study leader and Heart Disease Prevention Program director.

The researchers analyzed data from the nearly 3,000 adults older than 20 who participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey in 2003-04 and published their findings in the *American Heart Journal*.

"While national treatment recommendations have focused on aggressive management of LDL-C levels, mainly through statin therapy, we have

found little change in HDL-C levels and an actual increase in triglyceride levels," Wong said. "This is not good news, as these factors are important components of cardiovascular risk."

Persons with known cardiovascular diseases should have LDL-C levels below 100 mg (or below 130 mg for most other adults). For all adults, HDL-C levels should be 40 mg or higher for men and 50 mg or higher for women. Triglyceride levels should be below 150 mg.

Obesity and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle are controllable factors that can lead to low HDL-C and elevated LDL-C and triglycerides. High blood pressure, smoking and diabetes can further compound risks associated with high lipid levels.

Wong recommends that all adults have a lipid profile done and speak to their healthcare provider about lifestyle measures and appropriate medications to improve their levels.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading killer of Americans, taking nearly 500,000 lives each year. To decrease risk, doctors recommend that people control their weight, blood pressure and blood lipid levels through good lifestyle habits and minimal stress.

Source: University of California - Irvine

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