

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is waxy substance found in our cells and blood. It is needed to make hormones and other things the body uses. Your body makes cholesterol and it's also in our food like eggs, meat and cheese.

If there is too much cholesterol in the blood it can combine with other substances and forms plaque that sticks to our arteries which leads to disease since the arteries become narrow or eventually become blocked.

When we test for cholesterol, there are different components that we look at. HDL and LDL are two of the main ones. These are known as "good" cholesterol and "bad" cholesterol, but they are transporters for the lipids/fat so they can move through our blood. HDL are known as good because they are able to carry cholesterol from our body back to the liver to get rid of it. LDL is labeled "bad" because a high number of these in our blood causes that plaque build up. Having high LDL raises your risk of heart attacks, stroke and other health problems. Triglycerides are the other component we look at. These are not technically cholesterol. They are another kind of fat. When you eat your body turns any unused calories into triglycerides and are stored in fat cells, later hormones release these for energy between meals. Eating too many calories than you need on a regular basis or eating too many high carb foods causes excess triglycerides to form. These can also cause heart disease and even pancreatitis.

Some things can raise your risk of having high cholesterol. Cholesterol can rise as you get older, it can be caused from genetics, being overweight and certain races have increased risk of higher levels. So, it's important to focus on the things that you can control. You should avoid eating a lot of bad fats and fried foods. Pick leaner meats and choose healthier oils like avocado and olive oil. Too much sitting and little exercise decreases your HDL levels. Smoking also lowers HDL and increases LDL. To help triglyceride levels avoid sugars and foods with white flours and limit alcohol.

If you make these changes and your levels are still elevated, or you have other health conditions medications may be needed. Statins are a medication that reduce the production of cholesterol in the liver, so they lower your LDL and raise HDL which slows the formation of plaques. Fish oil can also help lower triglycerides and raise HDL. Fibrates are another medication to lower Triglycerides and increase HDL.

It is good to monitor cholesterol levels yearly to monitor your risk for cardiovascular disease. Therefore, it's included in your biometric screens. Call us if you are concerned about your levels!



**Ozaukee County Employer
Clinic located inside Aurora
Port Washington Clinic
1475 W. Grand Ave**

Elizabeth Merry, FNP-BC • Nurse Practitioner

Clinic Hours of Operation

Monday 9am-5pm

Tuesday & Thursday 9am-3pm

Wednesday 7:30am-5pm

Friday 9am-4:30pm

Call us to make an in person or virtual appt at:

262-268-6610 or 262-268-6603

Please note, standard Aurora COVID-19 protocols are in place.

Who can be seen? Health Plan participants over 2 years old may use the County Employee Health Center

 **Aurora Health Care**

We are  AdvocateAuroraHealth