

The ACC/AHA/ABC Multisociety Dyslipidemia management guidelines were released last week and address the substantial increase in knowledge regarding cholesterol control and cardiac event prevention since the 2018 guidelines were published. The new guidelines underscore the overwhelming data that demonstrate heart attacks, strokes and amputations can be prevented [**eliminated**] by tuning the metabolism to reduce cardiovascular risk.

Cholesterol is the major component of plaque clogging blood vessels that can slowly harden or suddenly rupture to compromise blood flow to the heart. An elevated serum cholesterol level is a **major** risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Reducing the amount of exposure of blood vessels to cholesterol can significantly prevent the formation of cholesterol plaques that cause heart attacks, strokes and amputations. However, a significant reduction of serum cholesterol level may require eliminating 50-60% of the cholesterol circulating in your body. This level of control can be a challenging to achieve but is easily attainable [with access to care] for most Americans without regard to race or ethnicity. Reducing exposure also requires that cholesterol reduction start earlier in life, built on a foundation of healthy diet.

The new guidelines do not underemphasize the importance of diet and other lifestyle activities that lower serum cholesterol. However, based on the typical American diet and lifestyle, most people may require medication to clear serum cholesterol circulating in the blood vessels. Fortunately, there are now several very effective methods that can bring serum cholesterol down to the proper level. Unfortunately, not enough people are aware of the importance of keeping the cholesterol low to avoid heart attacks. The guidelines provide screening recommendations for **high-risk children and all individuals by 30 years of age**.

In addition to **'go low, start early'**, the guidelines **introduce L(p)a**, a new independent marker of cardiovascular risk. Lp(a) is a blood fat similar to LDL-C, the 'bad' cholesterol. Lp(a) is strongly associated with both plaque build-up and clotting in blood vessels. **Lp(a) levels in the blood are mostly genetically determined, and population distributions vary by ancestry (highest levels in individuals of African and South Asian ancestry)**. This marker may help explain the overabundance of cardiovascular issues African Americans experience at risk factor levels similar to the general population. Having an elevated L(p)a level suggests a more aggressive approach to cholesterol control is necessary. **A L(p)a level should be considered with the patient's first lipid panel, this is not a genetic test, fasting is not required.**

In addition to L(p)a, the guidelines also recognize **coronary calcium score testing as an adjunct to cholesterol control and cardioprevention**. While blood tests can determine the

level of cholesterol circulating in the bloodstream, a coronary calcium score is a non-invasive test that can visualize cholesterol already deposited in the blood vessels feeding the heart. Cholesterol build-up restricting blood flow to the heart can cause chest pain (angina), heart attacks (myocardial infarction), heart failure and death. Coronary artery disease is the leading cause of death in America. The ability to easily visualize plaque and understand higher risk should encourage patients and their clinicians to actively manage cholesterol control with monitoring and medications as necessary. Several of the highest level of recommendations in the new guidelines advocate for use of coronary calcium scoring.

The Association of Black Cardiologists endorses the new multisociety Dyslipidemia Guidelines in their entirety. We are very proud that our members participated in the development of this compendium of scientific data. The guidelines appreciate ethnocultural differences in getting patients to their serum cholesterol goal and ABC is committed to ensuring the guidelines are understood and followed by everyone at risk of heart disease. Every Heart Counts!!