**CHolesterol e**

**What is Good and Bad Cholesterol?**

Bad cholesterol, or Low Density Protein, is a lipoprotein that contains a lot of fat, which is transported throughout your body for your cells. But some of this cholesterol gets stuck to your artery walls as it travels in the blood. This is called plaque, and as it builds up over time it can cause a blockage or a stroke.

Good cholesterol, or High Density Lipoprotein, helps remove bad cholesterol from the artery walls. It has less fat, and is carried by a different protein. It moves bad cholesterol away from your heart and towards your liver, where cholesterol can be broken down.

**How can I Take Care of my Cholesterol?**

Doctors monitor concentrations of LDL and HDL in patients’ blood because too much LDL can pose serious heart disease risks, and needs adequate amounts of HDL to fight off heart disease. Large amounts of LDL can lead to arteries being blocked, and possible stroke and/or death. Serious treatments such as surgery may be needed when an artery is badly blocked by LDL plaque. Triglycerides are also monitored, because they are composed of fatty acids that also travel in the blood and can contribute to plaque.

**What does a Cholesterol Test do for Me?**

Cholesterol tests will measure your total cholesterol, LDL levels, HDL levels, and Triglyceride levels, which can indicate your chances of developing heart disease. Total cholesterol is determined by how many total fats are in your blood. LDL, HDL, and triglycerides all contribute to how healthy your cholesterol is. High levels of HDL are good, but high levels of LDL and triglycerides are bad and would need to be lowered.

**What can I do to Lower my Cholesterol?**

Lowering your cholesterol, in most cases, can be as easy as eating healthy. Foods such as vegetables and fruits can decrease LDL levels and increase HDL levels. Exercising regularly is also a good way to increase HDL levels. If other factors, such as family history, prevent your levels from lowering, then medicine is an option for lowering cholesterol.

Avoiding foods with trans fats and saturated (solid at room temperature) fats greatly decrease LDL levels. Unsaturated (liquid at room temperature) fats decrease LDL and can even increase HDL levels.