Lipids and Heart Health: Know Your Numbers

Cholesterol	• Target: ~200 mg/dL or less • **Your Value:**
Triglycerides	• Less than 150 mg/dL • **Your Value:**
HDL (Men)	• More than 40 mg/dL • **Your Value:**
HDL (Women)	• More than 50 mg/dL • **Your Value:**
LDL	• Less than 100 mg/dL • **Your Value:**

Lipids: What are they?

- **Cholesterol**
  - Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that is found in all the cells in your body, even your brain. Your body needs some cholesterol to make hormones, vitamin D, and to help you digest food. Your body makes some cholesterol, but it is also found in foods from animal sources, such as egg yolks, meat, and cheese.
  - If you have too much cholesterol in your blood it can combine with other substances in the blood to form plaque and can cause heart problems.
- **Triglycerides**
  - Triglycerides are the storage form of fat in the blood. Having high levels can make your blood thick and milky. This can increase your risk of heart disease.
  - High levels can be caused by eating extra calories or carbohydrates (sugars). Levels may also be high if you smoke, are overweight, use excessive alcohol or take certain medicines.
  - Poorly controlled diabetes, liver or kidney diseases, thyroid diseases and genetics can also cause high levels.

- **HDL (High-Density Lipoproteins)**
  - HDL is sometimes called **"good"** cholesterol because it carries cholesterol from other parts of your body back to your liver. Your liver then removes the cholesterol from your body.

- **LDL (Low-Density Lipoproteins)**
  - LDL is a lipoprotein that circulates in the blood, moving cholesterol around the body to where it is needed for cell repair. LDL is sometimes called **"bad"** cholesterol because a high LDL level can lead to the buildup of plaque in your arteries.

Recommenations:

- **Consume healthy fats**
  - Consuming healthy fats can decrease LDL (bad) cholesterol and decrease triglycerides. Examples include olive oil, fatty fish, walnuts, chia seeds, and avocado.

- **Avoid processed foods and trans fats**
  - Processed foods and trans fat can increase total cholesterol and lowers HDL (good) cholesterol. Limit hydrogenated oils that can be found in fast food, fried foods, snack cakes, chips, and baked goods.

- **Consume high fiber foods**
  - Increasing fiber can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Beans, oatmeal, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, whole wheat bread products are all high fiber foods.

- **Lose weight if overweight or obese**

- **Be active**
  - Exercise can help balance lipid levels.