

## Do You Know Your Numbers?

### *The Top 4 You Need to Protect Your Health*

Knowing your cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar and body mass index are gateways to understanding and protecting your health. Taking action to improve your numbers reduces your odds of developing heart disease and other life-threatening illnesses. Always work with a medical professional before making changes to your health regimen.



#### 1. Cholesterol

Years of consuming high-fat foods and high-cholesterol foods can clog the arteries and lead to a stroke or heart attack. A “sudden” heart attack may actually be the result of consuming high-fat foods for years and failing to monitor cholesterol levels.

“Good” cholesterol (HDL) should be above 40 mg/dL. “Bad” cholesterol (LDL) should be below 130 mg/dL. Total cholesterol should be below 200 mg/dL, with 200-239 considered borderline and 240+ considered high. To reduce levels, start by consuming less red meat, exercising a minimum of 30 minutes a day, and walking. Consult your physician first.

#### 2. Blood Pressure

Did you know that blood pressure is one of the strongest indicators for heart disease risk? Known as the silent killer, many people do not know or feel the symptoms of high blood pressure. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, increases the risk for heart

disease, stroke, and kidney disease. Familiarize yourself with these two blood pressure numbers:

1. **Systolic** – The top number is pressure resulting from the heart contracting.
2. **Diastolic** – The bottom number is pressure when the heart is at rest between beats.

A healthy blood pressure is 120/80 or below. Decreasing sodium intake and increasing potassium consumption are two ways to help lower blood pressure.

#### 3. Blood Sugar

Glucose, which is sugar stored in the blood, is the main source of energy in the body. Elevated glucose levels are a major concern for the possibility of developing diabetes. Glucose levels will continue to rise after a diabetic individual eats because there is not enough insulin to move the glucose into the body's cells. People with type 2 diabetes don't use insulin

efficiently (insulin resistance) and don't produce enough insulin (insulin deficiency).

Some symptoms to be mindful of are fatigue, blurred vision, frequent thirst, frequent urination, and weight loss. Blood sugar tests are typically administered to diagnose diabetes. A fasted blood sugar should be below 100 mg/dL. Individuals diagnosed with diabetes should monitor their blood sugar levels with the assistance of a medical professional.

#### **4. Body Mass Index (BMI)**

BMI is a calculation of your height to weight ratio. The BMI measurement was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

While measuring BMI is one method to determine if a person is overweight, it is not an ideal method. In individuals who have an above average muscle mass, their BMI measurement most likely will indicate that they are overweight or obese, even if they are in great physical shape. On the flip side, individuals who are underweight may have a healthy BMI measurement. Be sure to consult a trained professional to measure body fat percentage and work with your physician to monitor your weight. Both measures are first steps to maintaining a healthy weight.

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#### *References:*

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