Cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes heart attacks and strokes, is the leading cause of death in the United States.

CVD is commonly caused by narrowing of the arteries (sometimes called atherosclerosis) due to the formation of plaque in the arteries - this can make it more difficult for blood to flow.

- Having high cholesterol levels can increase your risk of CVD.
- Other things that can increase your risk of CVD include: having high blood pressure, having diabetes, using tobacco, and being overweight.
- Reducing cholesterol levels can reduce CVD risk.

Understanding Cardiovascular Disease

Healthy Artery

Narrowed Artery

PLAQUE (FAT)

Increased Blockage = Increased Risk

Understanding Cholesterol and Triglyceride Levels

Total Cholesterol Level

- HDL-c: "Good cholesterol"
  - Normal = 40-59 mg/dL
- LDL-c: "Bad cholesterol"
  - Normal = 100-129 mg/dL

- Triglycerides: A type of fat that is circulated in the blood
  - Normal = <150 mg/dL

Your total cholesterol is a number that is based on your HDL cholesterol (HDL-c), LDL cholesterol (LDL-c), and your triglycerides.

The following can increase your CVD risk:

- Having too little HDL-c
- High levels of LDL-c
- High levels of triglycerides
**REDUCING CVD RISK**

You can reduce your CVD risk by eating a healthy diet, exercising, and quitting tobacco

- Many patients take medications called statins to help lower cholesterol and reduce CVD risk
- New information has shown that patients with high triglycerides (≥150 mg/dL) who take statins can lower their CVD risk by lowering their triglycerides
- Certain medications, called omega-3 fatty acids may help to lower triglycerides and reduce CVD risk

**BENEFITS OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS**

- Fish oil supplements are not reviewed or approved by the FDA, and should not be used in place of prescription medications, according to the American Heart Association

- Prescription omega-3 fatty acids (Lovaza® and Vascepa®) have been shown to reduce triglyceride levels by about 30% in patients with high triglyceride levels

- Only Vascepa® (icosapent ethyl) has been shown to reduce the risk of CVD

- Vascepa® reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease by 25% in patients with high triglycerides who are also taking a statin medication

- Not all sources of omega-3 fatty acids provide the same benefits in terms of reducing the risk of CVD

**SOURCES OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS**

- Common sources of omega-3 fatty acids include food, fish oil supplements, and prescription medications

- Prescription omega-3 fatty acids are highly purified and have been approved by the FDA

- Fish oil supplements are readily available without a prescription, but haven’t been shown to reduce the risk of CVD


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