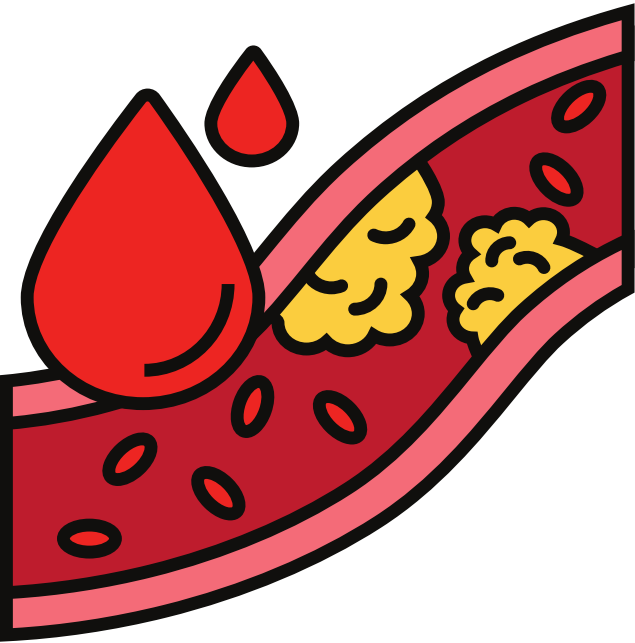# National Cholesterol Education Month

Unpacking High-Density Lipoproteins (HDL)

Cholesterol levels are a significant marker for cardiovascular health. High density lipoproteins (HDL) are typically known as the "good" cholesterol. HDL cholesterol is important to have in high amounts because it helps remove plaque formations in the bloodstream. These plaques are sent to your liver to break down and then removed from the body.

The Cleveland Clinic recommends a HDL level of 40mg/dL or higher for males and 50mg/dL or higher for females. Optimal levels of HDL are 60mg/dL or higher.

How to improve HDL Cholesterol

1. Exercise

Exercise is the number one way to help increase HDL levels. The recommended amount of exercise is 150 minutes a week which is just 30 minutes of exercise 5x/week. Studies have shown that cardiovascular exercise may help boost your HDL levels 5-20% percent with consistent exercise. Try to incorporate some form of aerobic exercise into your week such as brisk walking, running, biking, etc.

2. Consume Healthy Fats

Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids are viewed as heart healthy because they help boost HDL levels. Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, cod liver oil, and sardines are examples of foods high in omega-3 fatty acids. Foods such as olive oil, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, avocado, chia seeds, and flax seeds are other examples of healthy fats. These fats are heart protective and may lower the risk of heart disease by increasing HDL levels.

3. Avoid Trans Fats

Foods high in trans fats are highly inflammatory which can increase heart disease and push down HDL levels. Foods that have trans fats in them should be avoided such as margarine, vegetable oil, commercial baked foods like muffins and cookies, frozen pizza, microwave popcorn, and refrigerated dough.

Holtyn & Associates