Zip Your Lipids

HAART is famous for raising cholesterol, but you're lacking in lipid linguistics? Fatten up:

October 1, 2003 By David Gelman, MD

Lipids—A lippy word for fats or oils—principally cholesterol and triglycerides—found in the blood. You can keep **cholesterol and triglycerides** levels on the level by exercising, checking your diet with a nutritionist and **quitting cigarettes (they contribute to heart disease risk).** Doc may also prescribe drugs to flatten high fat counts. The two most common forms of cholesterol are HDL and LDL.

HDL, or high-density lipoprotein—This goody-two-shoes cholesterol **scavenges fat from blood vessels** and other bodily haunts and returns it to the liver for use or destruction. You want high levels of this one. **An HDL score over 65 seems to reduce heart-disease risk**; under 35 signals heightened hazard.

LDL—When bad cholesterol happens to good people. The "L" means "low" (or "lousy"), and **you want it to lie *low* in your blood**. HDL's evil twin, it stuffs cholesterol into blood vessels and other locales, causing clogging and hardening. An LDL value of 70 is touted as "ideal," but **most docs aim for 100 or 130**.

Triglycerides—The main fat in food—and in our own bodies. Some HIV meds (especially some PIs) can spike blood levels, requiring frequent testing—because **high triglycerides promote heart disease** and, in extreme cases, pancreatitis. (Normal levels range from 50 to 150.) Reyataz (atazanavir, see "New Meds on the Shelf") **holds promise for HIVers** who want HAART that won't send their lipid profile flying high.

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