Customizing Cholesterol Treatments to Fit Your Needs

When it comes to creating cholesterol treatment plans, did you know doctors are supposed to ask for your input? Updated cholesterol guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology (ACC) encourage providers and patients to work together. By lending your voice to the decision-making process, you have an opportunity to express your individual values and preferences and will be more likely to follow your treatment plan.

What Else Is New?

The new guidelines now recommend that physicians prescribe additional drugs for certain patients who don't respond to statins—medications commonly used to treat high cholesterol.

But the most important takeaway from the guidelines is that cholesterol treatment is not one-size-fits-all. For each patient, the health care provider needs to take several factors into consideration, including:



- Age
- Race
- Blood pressure
- LDL ("bad") cholesterol
- Personal history of smoking cigarettes
- Family history of premature heart disease
- Other health conditions

If your provider recommends a statin or other treatment plan without asking for your input, speak up! You have the right to ask questions about available options and understand the risks and benefits before agreeing to treatment.

Lifestyle Changes to Lower Cholesterol

Even with a customized cholesterol treatment plan, there is one thing that's universal for all patients: Everyone should eat a healthy diet and get regular physical activity to prevent high cholesterol. According to the AHA/ACC guidelines, adults should try to get about 120 to 160 minutes of aerobic activity every week.

And don't forget about your diet! Whether going out to a restaurant or dining in at home, limit the amount of sweets, sugary drinks and red meats you consume. Instead, focus on having plenty of:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grains
- Legumes
- Low-fat dairy products
- Poultry (without the skin)
- Fish/seafood
- Nuts
- Nontropical vegetable oils

Sources include American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology.

