High Lipid Levels after Organ Transplant

Lipid levels or cholesterol in the body can be high after transplant. Cholesterol and triglycerides are two types of fats in the body that are needed for cell health and making hormones. After transplant, medicines are taken to prevent organ rejection can lead to higher cholesterol levels.

About High Cholesterol

When lipid levels are high, fats stick to the walls of blood vessels. As plaque builds up, it causes the blood vessels to narrow, making it hard for blood to flow. This can lead to cardiovascular disease, atherosclerosis, stroke, or related problems with your heart and blood vessels. If you have a kidney, heart or liver transplant, you are at greater risk for high lipids.

Body Lipids

There are 3 main types of lipids or fats in the blood:

- High Density Lipoproteins (HDL) often called "good" cholesterol. The recommended level is greater than 40 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL).
- Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL) often called "bad" cholesterol. The recommended level is less than 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL).
- Triglycerides. The recommended level is less than 150.

A lipid panel or cholesterol test often gives four numbers: total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, and triglycerides. The goal is to have total cholesterol less than
200 milligrams per deciliter. While each lipid number is important, your doctor will review the ratio between HDL and LDL levels, and triglycerides.

Causes of high lipid levels
There may be several reasons for higher lipid levels
- Genetics
- Immunosuppression medicines, such as Prednisone, Cyclosporine (Neoral), Sirolimus (Rapamune) or Tacrolimus (Prograf)
- Certain pre-existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure or heart disease, low thyroid function or liver disease
- Risk factors such as pre-existing diabetes or problems with blood sugar control, tobacco use, or overweight

Testing and Treatment
If you notice changes to your BUN and Creatinine levels, tell your doctor and transplant coordinator. Your doctor will measure and monitor lipid levels. Do not drink or eat anything 12 hours before your lipid test.

Your doctor may recommend:
- Making lifestyle changes, such as eating a diet lower in fat and cholesterol, maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular exercise.
- Medicines to lower lipids levels in the body.
- Avoiding alcohol.
- Controlling blood sugar levels with high fiber, low carbohydrate foods.
- Stop smoking.

For More Information
If you notice any changes to your health, such as side effects from your medicines, or muscle aches or weakness in your arms or legs, tell your doctor or transplant coordinator. Tell your transplant coordinator if you had any changes to your medicines.