

# Being **Active** When You Have **Blood Lipid** **Disorders**

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Do you want to feel better, sleep better and move better? Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes! In fact, the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology recommend physical activity as an important lifestyle therapy for treating blood lipid disorders and reducing heart disease risk.

The most commonly measured blood lipids are low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL or bad cholesterol), high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL or good cholesterol) and triglycerides. The direct effects of exercise on these blood lipids can vary in a person because things such as diet, weight loss, genetics and medications also influence cholesterol and triglycerides. However routine physical activity can help raise HDL-C and lower LDL-C and triglycerides in many people.

## Getting Started

### Keep it Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout the day. It all adds up.



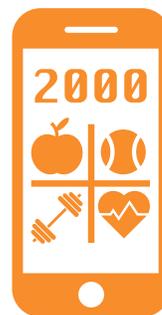
### Build A Plan

Physical activity can improve blood lipids but reducing your body weight and fat through healthier eating is also necessary. Talk with your health care provider to develop a plan. A registered dietitian and exercise professional can help.



### Think 2000

A physical activity program that burns 2000 calories/week is a good goal for improving blood lipids. Activity trackers, mobile phone apps, and fitness watches provide a fun and helpful way to track your activity and calories.



### Motivation

What will help you stick with an activity plan? Would exercising with a friend help? Is there a better time of day? Would you do better in a supervised program or fitness center?



Start where you are. Use what you have. **Do what you can.**

## Blood Lipid Disorder Tips and Cautions

Your provider may prescribe a lipid-lowering medication, like a statin. Taking a statin doesn't mean you should ignore physical activity. The combination of statins and regular exercise can improve your heart health and blood lipids more than either treatment alone.

Some statins can cause muscle soreness or other side effects. If you experience symptoms, talk with your health care provider about managing your statin and activity routine to reduce muscle symptoms.

LDL-C plays a big role in developing heart disease. Aerobic activity at least 5 days per week of 30-60 minutes/day can reduce LDL-C, but lowering calorie intake to lose weight is equally important. Frequent moderate or vigorous aerobic activity can raise HDL-C, which reduces heart disease risk.

Physical activity can *immediately* reduce levels of blood glucose and triglycerides. So, exercising most days of the week is better than being a "weekend warrior." And being active after a meal is a better than watching TV or being on your computer.

## Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing and will improve your stamina. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling or water exercise) to a vigorous activity (like jogging, singles tennis or hiking hills).

### What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity



### How often?

3-5 days/week



### How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard



### How much?

Start w/ a few minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 minutes over the day.



**Remember:** Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Aim for 20-30 minutes most days of the week to achieve 150 minutes/week. Be active however and wherever you can. To lose weight, do twice as much activity. Weight loss can help improve your blood lipids.

## Aerobic Activity Tips and Cautions

- If you go too hard, too soon, you'll tire out quickly. To start, go longer, not harder.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active.
- Warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.

## Blood Lipid Nutrition Fact

A few smart food choices can help get your blood lipids into a better range. Eat more whole grains (oats, bran), fruits and vegetables. Dietary fiber helps to lower LDL-cholesterol. Also include omega-3 fatty acids from dark green, leafy vegetables (such as spinach or kale), fatty fish (such as salmon or sardines), soybeans and walnuts. You can take charge of your blood lipids!



# Strength Training



Strength training, such as working with weights or resistance bands, improves your strength and also adds muscle. You'll be able to do daily and fun activities easier and safer. More muscle and less fat is good for your blood lipids, heart health and metabolism.

## What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, kitchen counter push-ups chair squats)



## How often?

2-3 days/week  
\*Rest day in between



## How hard?

Start with light effort.  
Build up to medium or hard effort.



## How much?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group) Build up to 8-12 reps of challenging effort. Repeat 2-4 times.



**Remember:** If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

# Other Types of Physical Activity



Aerobic activity and strength training are particularly helpful for those with blood lipid disorders. However, you may enjoy and benefit from these other options.

## Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-7 days/week to the point of feeling tightness for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.



## Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball. Dance. Tend your garden. Be active outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it more often.



## Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker to measure your activity and stay motivated. Slowly build up to 7,000-9,000 steps/day.



## Yoga, Pilates and tai chi

All help with balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!



## More Help

Go to [acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro](https://www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro) to find an **ACSM certified exercise professional** near you.

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_