

LIPOPROTEIN(a): What you need to know

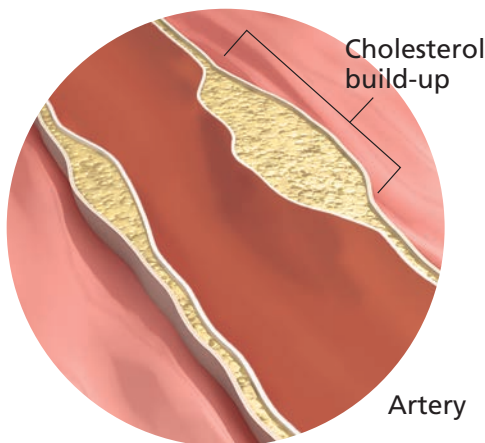
What is Lipoprotein(a)?

Lipoprotein(a) is a particle in your blood which carries cholesterol, fats and proteins. The amount your body makes is inherited and determined by the time you are born. It does not change very much during your life and is not affected by diet or exercise.

Lipoprotein(a) is also known as

- Lp(a)
- Lipoprotein-little-a
- L-p-a
- L-p-little-a

Some cholesterol and Lp(a) in your blood is normal. A high level of LDL, the bad cholesterol, increases your risk for heart attack or stroke. High levels of Lp(a) also increase your risk.



About 20 percent of people, or 1 in 5, have high levels of Lp(a). This level may differ depending upon your ethnic background or if you have kidney disease. Check with your nurse or doctor for specific guidelines that apply to you.



Testing for Lipoprotein(a)

A simple blood test can measure your Lp(a) level; however, it is not included in most standard cholesterol or lipid panels.

Levels of Lp(a) are reported in different units, either mg/dL or nmol/L. A normal level is less than **30 mg/dL** or less than **75 nmol/L**.

Here is a list of reasons an Lp(a) blood test may be right for you. Ask your nurse or doctor if you have questions.

You or a family member have had a heart attack or stroke at an early age, men younger than 55 years old and women less than 65 years old

You or a family member developed high blood pressure at an early age

Someone in your family has high Lp(a). If an adult has high Lp(a), their children have a 1 in 2 chance of inheriting it.

Having high levels of LDL, even while taking medicine to treat it

Having FH, Familial Hypercholesterolemia, an inherited condition of very high cholesterol levels

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What Can You Do?

If you have high levels of Lp(a), your nurse or doctor will identify what treatments might work best for you. There is not one treatment that works for all patients.

A healthy lifestyle is important to reduce your overall risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke. Prescribed medicines and medical procedures are still very important to help you manage any other risk factors.



What can you do about lifestyle?

- Eat a healthy diet. Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov for ideas.
 - Lots of vegetables and whole fruits
 - Whole grains instead of simple carbohydrates
 - Limit sweets and sugary drinks
 - Limit foods high in saturated and trans fats
- Aim for 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Stop smoking. Visit smokefree.gov or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Ask your nurse or doctor for help.
- Control your weight. Ask your nurse or doctor for help.
- If you drink alcohol, less is better. Limit yourself to 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men.
- Manage stress with regular physical activity and relaxation exercises such as yoga or meditation.

Resources

American Heart Association: heart.org

Foundation of the National Lipid Association: learnyourlipids.com/lipid-disorders/a-word-about-lipoproteina/

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association: pcna.net

What about medications and procedures?

- It is important to manage all your risk factors. Take prescribed medicines for lowering:
 - High cholesterol
 - High blood pressure
 - High blood sugar/diabetes
- There is not a medicine available that just lowers high Lp(a). The good news is that lowering LDL, the bad cholesterol, will lower your risk of heart attack and stroke even if you have high Lp(a).
- Medicines called statins work mainly to lower LDL cholesterol.
- Injectable medicines called PCSK9 inhibitors are used to lower LDL cholesterol and they also lower Lp(a).
- Niacin is sometimes used to lower Lp(a). It can also lower LDL cholesterol. Talk with your nurse or doctor before taking over-the-counter niacin.

Medical procedures

- In certain cases, apheresis may be used. This procedure is used to filter the blood to remove LDL, the bad cholesterol, and Lp(a). The effects are temporary and often need to be repeated every 1 to 2 weeks.

Future treatments

Scientists are still studying why people with high Lp(a) levels are more likely to have heart attacks and strokes. They are also exploring how best to treat high Lp(a) levels, including new medicines to lower them.

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