DYSLIPIDAEMIA & EXERCISE

PUBLIC

WHAT IS DYSLIPIDAEMIA?

Dyslipidaemia refers to abnormal levels of blood fats (lipids) or 'lipoproteins', the carriers that move fat around the body. The most common dyslipidaemias are high blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels, high levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-c, the 'bad' cholesterol) and low levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-c, the 'good' cholesterol). It can contribute to the risk of cardiovascular disease and other conditions like type 2 diabetes.

HOW IS DYSLIPIDAEMIA TREATED?

Management of dyslipidaemia is important for people with, or at risk of, cardiovascular disease. Even small improvements in lipid levels can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular events and death. Management of dyslipidaemia should include lifestyle changes such as taking regular exercise, improving the diet and, ideally reducing weight for people who are overweight or obese. When lifestyle changes are not sufficient a doctor may prescribe medications to help achieve better blood fat levels.

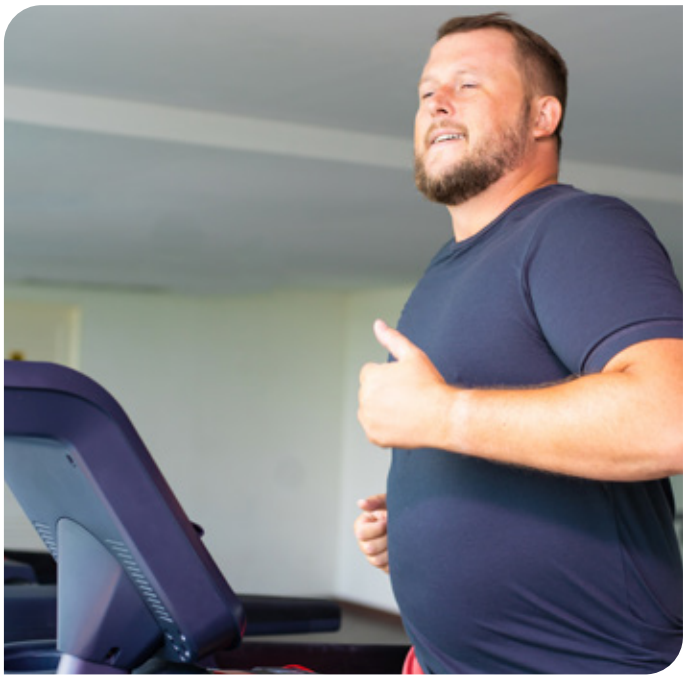
HOW DOES EXERCISE HELP WITH DISLIPIDAEMIA?

For adults with cardiovascular disease and overweight/obesity regular exercise can:

- Decrease blood triglyceride levels
- Produce modest increases in HDL-c

Regular exercise may lead to small reductions in cholesterol levels but usually not LDL-c. Benefits on cholesterol, LDL-c and blood triglyceride levels are often better with dietary change or the combination of exercise and diet than exercise alone, especially when these lead to weight loss. Combining exercise with medication (statin) treatment does not improve dyslipidaemia better than medication therapy alone, however regular exercise has other benefits for people with dyslipidaemia including:

- Assisting with weight loss and weight management
- Improving cardiorespiratory fitness
- Reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes
- Improving cardiovascular risk and death rate



HOW DO I GET STARTED?

If you have any questions as to whether, or what type of exercise is right for you, you may seek guidance from your medical practitioner and a referral to an accredited exercise professional (such as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist or Physiotherapist). These professionals can conduct appropriate screening to determine what type of exercise will be both safe and beneficial for you, and can tailor a program to suit your goals, preferences and exercise abilities. This is particularly important if you are starting a new exercise program, or significantly changing your current exercise program. Visits to these allied health professionals may be covered by your private health insurance and Medicare (under a chronic disease management plan which can be developed by your General Practitioner).

If you are also being managed by other health professionals such as a cardiologist or an endocrinologist, it is important to let them know of your intentions to commence an exercise program.

WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISE IS BEST?

Aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming, jogging, dancing and team sports) is beneficial for the management of dyslipidaemia and also improves the health of your heart, blood vessels and your cardiorespiratory fitness. Resistance exercise (such as weightlifting, body weight exercises, resistance band exercises and circuit training) can improve dyslipidaemia and also help to promote healthy muscles and bones.

You should aim to achieve 150-300 minutes per week of aerobic exercise at a 'moderate' intensity. A simple rule of thumb is to exercise at a level that increases your breathing and heart rate but still allows you to maintain a conversation. Aim to do resistance training involving 2–3 sets of 8–10 different exercises, at a load that can be performed for 8–15 repetitions for each exercise, on two to three non-consecutive days per week.

It is important to select activities that are within your physical capabilities to prevent the risk of injury and to work with an accredited exercise professional if you have any musculoskeletal or other health concerns. It is also important to choose exercises that you enjoy so that you will stick to your exercise plan in the long-term.

RESOURCES & FURTHER INFORMATION

Exercise is Medicine Australia www.exerciseismedicine.org.au
Exercise Right www.exerciseright.com.au
Find a Physiotherapist www.choose.physio
Find an Accredited Exercise Physiologist www.essa.org.au

Prepared by Associate Professor Nathan Johnson and Associate Professor David Sullivan.

National Heart Foundation
www.heartfoundation.org.au

Endorsed by Heart Foundation

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