


Healthy Outcomes

American Heart Month 

Central PA
Health Care Quality Unit
Monthly Newsletter
February 2024



What is Lipoprotein(a)?

Familyheart.org

You will often see Lipoprotein(a) referred to as Lp(a), pronounced "L-P-little-A."

It is an important genetic factor that increases the risk for both heart disease and stroke. Much like low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, Lp(a) carries cholesterol in the blood.

What does it mean to have high Lp(a)?

The first thing to know is that Lp(a) levels are genetically determined. You inherited your Lp(a) levels, and they are completely unrelated to diet and lifestyle choices. You can find out your Lp(a) levels with a simple blood test. If your Lp(a) level is greater than 125 nmol/L (50 mg/dL), you have high Lp(a).

(Continued on page 2...)

WHAT'S NEW

American Heart Month
What is Lipoprotein(a)?
Myth vs Fact
Winter Wellbeing
HRST Gatekeeper Update
HRST Helpful Tools
Learning Opportunities
Vegetable Fried Rice Recipe
Shopping Tools

(Continued from page 1...)

If you have high Lp(a), this is an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease. High levels of Lp(a) collect in your arteries, gradually narrowing them and limiting blood supply to the heart, brain, kidney, and legs.

How do genetics play a role in Lp(a)?

The amount of Lp(a) in your body is determined by the genes you received at birth from your parents.

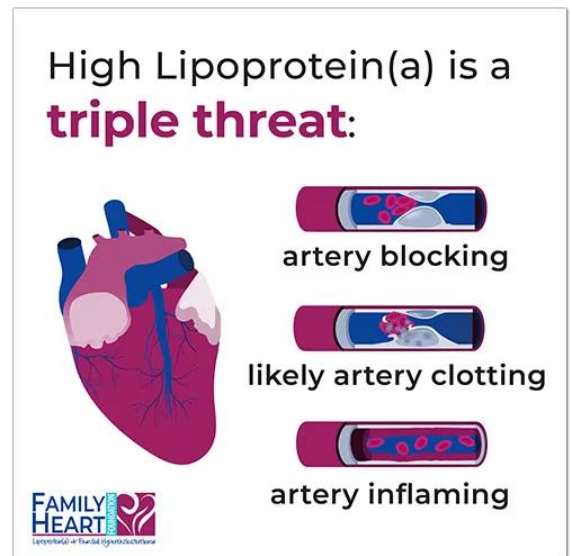
Lp(a) reaches its adult level by around age 5 and remains stable thereafter – except during acute illness and menopause, which can both cause Lp(a) to increase. Lp(a) levels are completely unrelated to your lifestyle.

Do different ethnicities have different Lp(a) levels?

High Lp(a) occurs in all ethnicities, but it is more common in Black and South Asian individuals than in white, Hispanic, or East Asian individuals.

More research and improved testing methods are needed to better understand the influence of race and ethnicity on Lp(a).

1 In 5 Have A Hidden Risk | Lp(a) Blood Testing Matters: Talk with your health care provider.



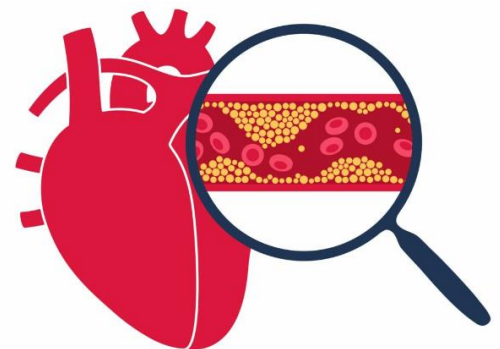
Understanding the Lp(a) Test

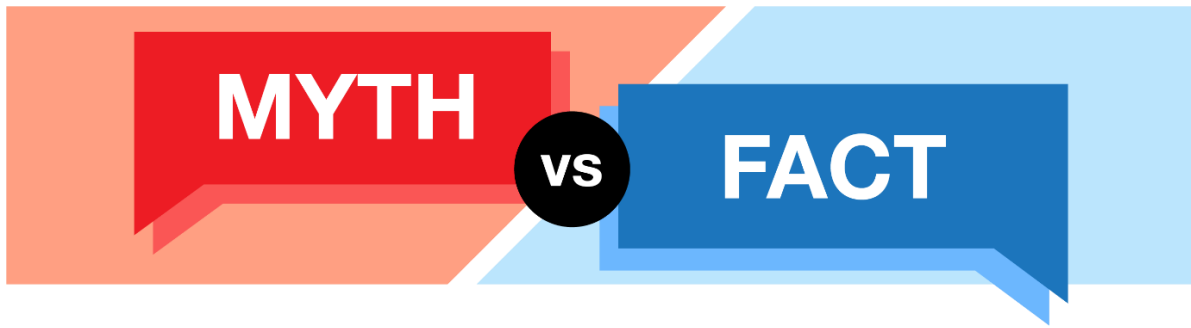
Lp(a) is similar to LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein) found in our cholesterol levels, however it has an added protein known as APO(a).

This protein can block our arteries, increase plaque build-up, and has a clotting behavior which hugely increases our risk of heart attack and stroke.

The important thing to note is that since Lp(a) levels are genetically determined, you only need to get tested once in a lifetime to evaluate your risk of premature cardiovascular disease.

Learn more at heart.org/lpa.





Myth: All expired At-Home COVID-19 rapid tests need discarded.

Truth: Depending on the COVID-19 rapid test, the expiration date may have been extended beyond what is listed on the package. [Check if your COVID-19 test expiration has been extended.](#)

Myth: Tube feeding prevents aspiration.

Fact: Oftentimes people assume that if an individual is no longer eating (NPO) and they are on a tube feeding for nutrition and hydration that that person is no longer at risk of aspiration. In fact, tube feedings do not necessarily reduce a patient's risk for aspiration. Tube feedings can be refluxed and then aspirated. [Language Fundamentals](#)

Myth: People without teeth do not need to clean their mouths.

Fact: EVERYONE needs a clean mouth. Without teeth, you can still brush the gums, tongue, and palate. Saliva can carry the germs from the mouth into the lungs and cause pneumonia, and we sometimes aspirate a little saliva while we sleep, making oral care before bed even more important. [TactusTherapy](#)

Myth: If you do not cough, you are not aspirating.

Truth: It is called silent aspiration for a reason. There is no sound. The only way to tell if someone is taking food or liquid into their lungs is to see it on an instrumental swallowing assessment (MBS/VFSS or FEES) to see what is really happening when they swallow. [TactusTherapy](#)

Myth: All UTIs cause symptoms.

Truth: Most UTIs cause symptoms, like pain or burning when urinating; feeling like you need to urinate often; or a burning sensation while urinating. However, it is possible to have bacteria in the urinary tract but not have any UTI symptoms. This is called asymptomatic bacteriuria, and it is more common in older adults or people who use a catheter to empty their bladders. [Mayo Clinic](#)

Myth: Milk soothes heartburn

Truth: Drinking milk to soothe heartburn is a popular home remedy, but you may want to hold off next time. It is true that milk neutralizes stomach acids at first, but then it triggers more acid production. It's also hard to digest, which can lead to even more acid production. [Heartburn Myths](#)



It's that time of year again. The sun is setting early. The weather is getting colder and colder. These winter months can take a toll on your physical and mental well-being. You may find yourself feeling more irritable, having low energy, or even struggling to do day to day routines.

WE ALL HAVE OUR STRUGGLES. IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP.

And help comes in many ways. With telehealth functionality, you can access mental health appointments without having to leave home. Online appointments are private and convenient.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 or text TALK to 741741.

5 Tips for Winter Wellness

Extra Sleep

With the shorter cooler days and longer nights our bodies naturally need more sleep. Try getting into bed 30 minutes earlier than usual in winter months.

Exercise Outside

Bundle up and take a walk. Even a 15-minute walk can make a difference. Exercise naturally supports a healthy mood and energy levels.

Stay Social

The winter months can naturally cause people to turn inward and more isolated. Make a date with friends or family at least once a week to keep your spirits high.

Eat Protein

Protein helps keep blood sugar levels stable and can reduce sugar cravings. Increasing carbohydrate and sugar intake during winter months can compromise the immune system.

Fruits and Vegetables

It is more important than ever during the winter to get a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every single day. Think "eat like a rainbow" when you are grocery shopping. ([REHEALTH.COM](https://www.rehealth.com))

Happy Valentine's Day. Always Love Yourself.

"Be you, love you. All ways, always." – Alexandra Elle



HRST Gatekeeper Update and Reminders

An **additional HRST gatekeeper** has been added to the Central PA HCQU. The gatekeeper's role consists of communicating with support staff from IntellectAbility to have HRST users or Raters added to the [HRST User Request Spreadsheet](#).

(Please email all three gatekeepers with requests.)

Cheryl L. Callahan: ccallahan@geisinger.edu

Patricia L. Brofee: plbrofee@geisinger.edu

*Traci J. Dunkelberger: tjdunkelberger@geisinger.edu



How often should the HRST be updated?



The HRST should be updated at a minimum once per year. Think of it as an annual check-up. An ideal time to complete an annual update of the HRST is when preparing to renew the person's annual plan. However, it is vital that the HRST be updated anytime the person experiences events that would affect scores, such as falls, injuries, seizure activity, ER visits, etc. The goal of the HRST is to track health risk movement so the team can respond appropriately. The Service Team and the HRST web-based application will assist users in ensuring everyone is receiving timely updates.

The Monthly Data Tracker (MDT) can be a life saver.

This fillable form is designed to allow those who support the person most directly to easily track changes related to the 22 rating items of the HRST. The MDT is designed to allow those who support the person most directly to easily track changes related to the 22 rating items of the HRST. Monthly tracking of this information allows a trained HRST Rater to update the HRST web-based application as changes occur. Click [here](#) for a video on how to use the [Monthly Data Tracker](#).

Best Practices for using the MDT.

1. Always review and assign a score to each of the 22 rating items monthly.
2. After reviewing the MDT each month, if there is a change in the score of any of the 22 rating items, alert a trained HRST Rater so that the web-based application can be updated, and appropriate follow-up action be taken by the Rater.

Note: The person(s) completing the MDT generally does not have extensive HRST training. It is the responsibility of the trained HRST Rater to verify accuracy of scoring prior to updating the HRST. [IntellectAbility FAQ](#).

Learning Opportunities

Take advantage of the HCQU's free virtual trainings and online learning system. The HCQU can help your agency and the individuals you support. We offer a wide variety of training topics concerning the physical and behavioral health care of people with IDD. Check out our [training calendar](#) and [online courses](#).

Emergencies: Are You Ready?

Tuesday, February 27, 2024, 10:00 - 11:00 am
Thursday, February 29, 2024, 1:00 - 2:00 pm

Presented by [Debra Erdman, RN MSN CCRN TCRN, Geisinger Outreach/Injury Prevention Coordinator](#) and [Girard Jenkins, Geisinger Program Integration Specialist Trauma, Trauma Center](#)

The targeted audience will be caregivers and support staff who support adult individuals with Intellectual Disabilities/Autism living in community settings. Anyone with an interest may join.

This information is not a substitute for first aid and CPR training.

Weis Markets Virtual Cook Along: Quick Meals for Heart Health

Join [Weis Dietitian Melissa](#) to learn about how to make heart health quick and easy. She will show you how to put together a simple tuna pasta salad.

Date: Wednesday, Feb. 21

Time: 1 - 2 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE- HCQU **Dental Health** Trainings

February 28, 2024, 10:00 am-11:00 am & 1:00 pm-2:00 pm



"I've been aware of the term "sepsis" for years, but I was not aware of the symptoms nor of the severity of it. This training was very informative and helpful; I am glad I did this training."

Supports Coordinator -Centre County

"The video at the beginning of the training was excellent. I did not know about Sepsis until I started working at this job and took trainings in it either."

Staff/Direct Support Professional (DSP)- Schuylkill County

"Training and the presenter were very thorough and very well done. Interesting and I learned more about dysphagia than I knew before."

Staff/Direct Support Professional (DSP)- Schuylkill County

Vegetable Fried Rice

[Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](#)

Serves 4 Cost/Serving \$1.01 Serving Size: 1 1/2 cups

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 eggs (lightly beaten)
- 2 tablespoons oil (canola or vegetable)
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder)
- 3 cups brown rice, cooked (cooked and cooled)
- 2 cups frozen vegetables, thawed
- 2 tablespoon low sodium soy sauce

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Spray with nonstick cooking spray. Add eggs. Cook and stir for 3 minutes or until eggs are firm. Set eggs aside on a plate.
2. Add the oil to the skillet. Heat over medium heat. Add onion and garlic. Cook and stir for 3 minutes.
3. Stir in the rice, vegetables, and soy sauce. Cook and stir for 3 minutes or until heated through. Stir in eggs.

If desired add 1 cup cooked meat, fish, chicken, or tofu.



SPEND SMART. EAT SMART.

Shopping Tools

You can eat healthy and stick to a tight grocery budget.

With a little planning, savvy shopping, and tasty recipes to cook at home, you will be well on your way. The Spend Smart. Eat Smart. Team is here to help!

Start your week off right with a healthy meal plan. Print a copy of the [five day meal planning worksheet in English](#) or [Spanish](#).

Think about what your family has coming up during the next five days. Do you need quick meals, company meals, something for a potluck, or something for a slow cooker?

Check what you have on hand. Check the refrigerator, freezer, and cupboard for foods that need to be used up.

Use a grocery list. Manage your budget and avoid impulse buying by making a list of the items you need each time you shop. Trips to the store to buy just one or two forgotten items can lead to impulse shopping. A good [grocery list](#) cuts down on these extra trips. See how to save [here](#).



WE CAN HELP!

Scan the QR Code or visit our website at www.geisinger.org/hcqu for HCQU staff contact information, free online courses, referral forms, HRST resources and more. Sign up for the monthly Healthy Outcomes Newsletter: HCQU@geisinger.edu.