

Ask Leyla: How do I raise my HDL?



Q: I've been working on optimizing my cholesterol levels:

Total cholesterol: 202

LDL: 150

HDL: 39

Triglycerides: 67

How can I increase my HDL without also increasing my LDL? I exercise regularly and adhere to a low carb, moderate fat diet. Are there any supplements that would help?

A: Optimal HDL levels would be greater than 50. Mid-70s to 80s is a good range to shoot for. HDL levels higher than 90 may indicate inflammation—especially when coupled with high C-reactive protein—hypothyroidism, or toxic exposures.

That said, there are two ways to optimize HDL: Increase fat intake and exercise.

You're already exercising, which is great. To optimize, aim for 30 minutes a day five to six days a week combining HIIT (high intensity interval training) and strength training on alternate days.

Your moderate fat intake may be lower than you describe. Increase your intake of the following foods to incorporate healthy fats into your diet:

- Grass fed (and finished) beef
- Wild Alaskan Salmon
- Pasture butter (from grass fed cows)
- Extra virgin olive oil (cold pressed)
- Nuts and seeds (not roasted in vegetable oil)
- Avocado

Remember that even though your LDL is considered high, the particle size is most important. Get a VAPS or NMR test to determine whether your LDL is mostly pattern A or pattern B. You're shooting for pattern A which a low-carb, high-fat diet will help you achieve.

Supplements to help increase HDL are bergamot (that lovely fragrance in Earl Grey tea) and niacin. When taking niacin long-term, it is important to have your liver function monitored by your doctor.

To your health!

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