Let's Talk About...

Pediatric lipids

What are lipids?

Lipids are fats in the body. There are different types of fat in our bodies, including some fats that are found in our blood.

- High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol: Sometimes called good cholesterol because it helps to remove fat from your blood vessels
- Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL): Sometimes called bad cholesterol because it can add fat to your blood vessels
- Triglycerides: Fats in your blood that your body uses for energy (too many can be unhealthy).
- Total cholesterol: HDL, LDL, and triglyceride levels combined

Fat is important for your child's body to work right, but too much fat can be dangerous. Your child may have dyslipidemia (diss-lip-ih-DEE-mee-uh) if the cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood are too high.

What causes high lipid levels?

High lipid levels can be caused by:

- Inherited conditions that make it hard for your child's body to process cholesterol
- Being overweight or obese
- Eating a diet high in bad fats and sugar

Why should I worry about my child's lipids?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the world. While heart attacks in children are very rare, high levels of cholesterol can make the blood vessels unhealthy and lead to heart disease later in life. High triglycerides can also contribute to early heart disease and may damage the pancreas.

How do I know if my child has high lipids?

Your child can have a simple blood test to check their cholesterol and triglyceride levels. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that all children 9–11 years old and 17–19 years old have this lab test. Children 12–16 do not usually have this test because their hormones can make results incorrect. Ask your child's healthcare provider if you'd like your child to have a cholesterol test.

How can I improve my child's lipid levels?

Diet and exercise are the most important ways to improve the lipids in your child's blood.

Do	Don't
• Exercise every day for at least 30 minutes • Eat lots of colorful vegetables • Eat whole grains • Use healthy oils (olive or canola oil) • Eat lean meats (fish or chicken)	• Drink sugary drinks (soda or juice) • Eat only starchy vegetables (potatoes, peas, or corn) • Eat processed foods high in sugar or fat • Exceed 2 hours of screen time every day • Eat too much red meat

What other resources are available?

If you are concerned about your child's cholesterol, the pediatric dyslipidemia clinic at Primary Children's Hospital may help. This clinic evaluates and treats children with high levels of cholesterol and triglycerides. It focuses on:

- Preventing heart disease in children with inherited lipid disorders or obesity
- Helping children make lifestyle changes to improve lipid levels in the blood
- Providing medicine to lower lipid levels in some cases

Ask your primary care provider about testing for lipids and possible referral to the pediatric dyslipidemia clinic.

Notes