



Press Release
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Prioritizing Heart Health During Cholesterol Education Month

Knox County Hospital District Emphasizes the Importance of Cholesterol Management

KNOX CITY, Texas (Sept. 6, 2024) – Cardiovascular disease continues to be a significant concern in the United States, even as medical research progresses and treatments advance. While the mortality rate associated with heart disease and stroke has decreased over the past several decades, these conditions remain the leading causes of death in the country.

As September marks National Cholesterol Education Month, Knox County Hospital District is urging the local community to take this opportunity to assess their heart health and make informed decision about managing their cholesterol levels.

Chris Scott-FNP, at the Munday Clinic, a service of Knox County Hospital District, stresses the importance of cholesterol management as a preventive measure against heart disease and stroke. “Cholesterol management is crucial in preventing heart disease and stroke,” Scott said. “Engaging in regular screenings and making informed lifestyle changes can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular complications. We want our community to understand that small adjustments in daily habits can lead to substantial improvements in heart health.”

Cholesterol, a fat-like substance in the blood, is essential for the body, but an imbalance, especially in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels, can be harmful. LDL, or "bad cholesterol," can accumulate in artery walls, leading to plaque buildup, which narrows and stiffens arteries. This increases the risk of blockages, heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes.

Cholesterol comes in two types: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). HDL, or "good cholesterol," helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream, while LDL delivers cholesterol to cells. High LDL levels raise the risk of atherosclerosis, a condition where narrowed arteries reduce blood flow, potentially causing chest pain, shortness of breath, or, in severe cases, a heart attack or stroke.

One of the challenges with cholesterol is that it often goes unnoticed until significant health issues arise. As Scott points out, “Many people are unaware of their cholesterol levels until it's too late. That’s why it’s essential to have regular screenings and discussions with your healthcare provider. By understanding your cholesterol levels, you can take proactive steps to manage them and reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 45% of U.S. adults who need medication to manage high cholesterol are not currently taking it. However, before medication is prescribed, regular screening is a critical first step in identifying those at risk and ensuring

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they receive appropriate treatment. The clinical laboratory at Knox County Hospital District offers comprehensive lipid panels that measure total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, and triglycerides—another type of fat found in the blood. This testing is crucial for understanding an individual’s cardiovascular health.

For those identified with high cholesterol, lifestyle changes are the first line of defense. Dietary adjustments are particularly effective. Incorporating heart-healthy foods into your diet can significantly impact cholesterol levels. Foods rich in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, such as salmon, avocados, and olive oil, can help reduce LDL cholesterol. Additionally, incorporating soluble fiber into the diet—found in foods like oats, beans, lentils, and fruits such as apples and pears—can help lower cholesterol levels by binding to cholesterol in the digestive system and preventing its absorption into the bloodstream.

It’s equally important to reduce the intake of foods high in saturated fats and trans fats, which can elevate LDL cholesterol levels. Foods to limit or avoid include red meats, full-fat dairy products, fried foods, and commercially baked goods like cookies, cakes, and pastries, which often contain partially hydrogenated oils—a primary source of trans fats.

In addition to dietary changes, increasing physical activity is crucial for managing cholesterol. “Incorporating even moderate exercise into your routine can make a significant difference,” added Scott. “We recommend at least 150 minutes of exercise each week to help manage cholesterol levels. This could include activities like brisk walking, swimming, or cycling.” Physical activity not only helps to lower LDL cholesterol but also raises HDL cholesterol, contributing to overall cardiovascular health. Moreover, weight management and quitting smoking are critical components of a cholesterol-lowering strategy.

Knox County Hospital District is committed to supporting the community’s heart health with state-of-the-art laboratory services. “We encourage everyone to take advantage of these resources, especially during Cholesterol Education Month, Scott emphasized.”

“Education is key to prevention,” noted Scott. “We want to empower our community with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their health. Regular check-ups and proactive management of cholesterol can save lives.”

About Knox County Hospital District

Founded in 1926, Knox County Hospital District provides healthcare for residents of Knox County and surrounding areas. The district offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, home health, physical therapy, long-term care, patient education, and more. For additional information, please call 940-657-3535 or visit www.knoxhospital.org.

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