



FEDERATION OF AMERICAN CONSUMERS AND TRAVELERS - NEWS RELEASE -

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Incidence of High Cholesterol Drops in U.S.

EDWARDSVILLE, IL, December 2, 2009 -The good news: a recent report shows the percentage of American adults with high LDL cholesterol, the "bad" kind that clogs arteries, decreased by about one-third between 1999 and 2006.

The bad news: too many of those who have dangerously high levels of LDL cholesterol don't know it, said study author Dr. Elena V. Kuklina, an epidemiologist and senior service fellow at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Her research was published in the Nov. 18 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"In the group with high LDL cholesterol, 60 percent of these people do not know they have this condition," Kuklina said. "They are in two major groups -- those who have never been screened, and those who have been screened but not diagnosed."

While many studies have found that overall cholesterol levels in American adults are decreasing, there has not been much information on LDL levels, Kuklina said. The study she did with colleagues at the CDC used data from consecutive results of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. It found that overall prevalence of high LDL cholesterol levels decreased from 31.5 percent in 1999-2000 to 21.2 percent in 2005-2006.

The report noted that there is no single definition of "high LDL." For persons at high risk of major problems because they have diagnosed heart disease, stroke or other cardiovascular conditions, the desired LDL level is 100 milligrams per deciliter of blood. For those at intermediate risk because they have two or more risk factors, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking or a family history of heart trouble, the desired level is 130. For those at low risk because they have no more than one risk factor, the desired level can be as high as 160.

As for the cause of the overall reduction in LDL cholesterol levels, Kuklina said, "we can only speculate." It could be changes in lifestyle, such as better diet, or it could be more widespread use of cholesterol-lowering medications such as statins.

There are different recommendations about the age at which cholesterol screening should begin, Kuklina noted. She said that the CDC, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, and the American Heart Association recommend that screening tests should start at age 20.

This news release has been issued by the Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT). FACT is a consumer organization, formed under the not-for-profit corporation laws of the District of Columbia in 1984. It currently serves more than 1 million consumers nationwide. Additional information on FACT may be found in the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, and by visiting the association's Web site (www.usafact.org). Informative, unbiased news bulletins are regularly disseminated by FACT to help its members remain current on matters which might seriously impact their lives. In addition to publishing consumer-related reports, the association provides more than 30 benefits for its members, ranging from [medical insurance](#) and [dental discounts](#) to [prescription drug savings](#) and [scholarships](#). FACT's administrative office is located at 318 Hillsboro Avenue, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

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