

Lipoprotein(a) Frequently Asked Questions

What is Lipoprotein(a)?

Lipoprotein(a), also referred to as Lp(a), is an LDL (bad cholesterol)-like particle that has an additional protein, called Apolipoprotein(a), attached to it. This extra protein seems to increase the risk of clotting. Elevated levels of Lp(a) can increase the risk of both heart attack and stroke.

What is a normal Lp(a) level?

Lp(a) can be measured in two ways: in mg/dL and nmol/L. It is important to know this so you can assess your level.

Lipoprotein(a)	Normal	Above Average	High
mg/dL	< 30	30-49	> 50
nmol/L	< 75	75-124	> 125 *

* Some groups (American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology) believe 125 nmol/L should be considered high.

How can I find out if I have an elevated Lp(a)?

You can ask your health care provider to order a simple non-fasting blood test to check your Lp(a).

What should I do if my level is high?

At present there is one FDA approved treatment for elevated Lp(a) called Lipoprotein Apheresis. This therapy physically removes both Lp(a) and LDL from a person's blood. It is approved only for people who already have cardiac disease or peripheral vascular disease (blockages in the extremities/neck arteries) and have both high LDL and Lp(a). There are medications aimed specifically at Lp(a) that are currently in clinical trials – so not yet FDA approved. If you have a high Lp(a) level, it is crucial to reduce any other risk factor you might have for heart disease or stroke. Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly. If you are over-weight, work on weight loss. Lower your LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, with medications if necessary. Raise your HDL (good) cholesterol with exercise and weight loss. Make sure your blood pressure and blood sugar are in the normal range. And importantly, don't smoke!

Since Lp(a) is inherited, if I have an elevated level should my children have their level checked?

Yes, your children and other first-degree relatives (siblings and parents) should all get a blood test to check their levels.

Are there any natural products I can use to lower my Lp(a)?

Your Lp(a) level is determined by your genetics. While diet and exercise are beneficial to your overall heart health, they won't lower Lp(a). Both niacin (a B vitamin) and estrogen are known to lower Lp(a) but have not been shown to be protective so are not routinely recommended. Some lipid specialists will recommend a daily aspirin (if tolerated) for people with high Lp(a) – this recommendation is based on "expert opinion" as there have not been studies to prove this to be beneficial.

Does Lp(a) level change over a person's lifetime?

We reach our adult Lp(a) level by age 5. In general, Lp(a) level is stable after age 5 with a couple of exceptions. Lp(a) can increase at the time of acute illness so shouldn't be measured at the time of a heart attack or bad virus. Additionally, at the time of menopause many women experience an increase in Lp(a) – this is thought to be due to a decline in estrogen.

Learn more at FamilyHeart.org

Lipoprotein(a) Structure

