



**Press Release**  
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**Media Contact**  
Matthew Kempton | mkempton@willapa.net  
360-875-4528

## **Education and Wellness Help Prevent Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease**

*September is National Cholesterol Education Month.*

SOUTH BEND, Wash. (Sept 15, 2020) – The number of Americans who die from heart disease and stroke has fallen over the past 50 years, but these conditions remain the two leading causes of death in the United States. As the understanding of cardiovascular issues improves, informed lifestyle changes can be life-saving measures.

September is National Cholesterol Education Month, and Willapa Harbor Hospital urges the community to take a moment to learn more about how controlling your cholesterol level can prevent diseases.

“The more you know and understand about cholesterol, the more actions you can take to prevent or better manage the condition,” says Dr. Steven Hill, DO, a Family Medicine physician in South Bend. “Your medical provider is a great starting point for figuring out your current cholesterol levels.”

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that your body needs to function. It circulates through your arteries. There are two types of cholesterol: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL).

HDL is a “good type” that circulates through the bloodstream, helping to remove bad cholesterol. LDL is the “bad type,” which physicians typically refer to when discussing cholesterol levels. When LDL levels increase, this fat-like substance builds along the walls of the arteries. When large mounds build, blood clots can occur, causing several health conditions, including stroke.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 55 percent of adults in the U.S. who need medication to lower their cholesterol are taking it.

The clinical laboratory at Willapa Harbor Hospital can provide cholesterol screening. A lipid/cholesterol test panel, which is most commonly ordered by physicians, measures levels of total cholesterol, HDL and LDL, along with triglycerides.

According to Dr. Hill, patients should fast for up to 12 hours before having blood drawn for the lipid test panel. Fasting helps the body regulate any foods previously consumed, thus providing a more accurate reading of the body’s normal cholesterol levels. Failure to fast before this screening could skew the data.

**MORE**



## **Education and Wellness Help Prevent Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease**

### **Page 2**

The American Heart Association recommends that individuals age 20 and older have their cholesterol levels checked every four to six years as part of a cardiovascular risk assessment. Those with elevated risks may be asked by their physicians to be screened more often.

Individuals with high cholesterol levels should make important lifestyle changes to lower their risks of developing cardiovascular complications. Lifestyle changes typically recommended by physicians include a change in diet and increased physical activity.

Well-balanced diets that exclude saturated and trans fats is key. Diets that include “good fats,” such as polyunsaturated fats, can help lower blood cholesterol levels.

Increasing daily exercise can help lower cholesterol levels. According to Dr. Hill, adults who engage in moderate-intensity exercise for at least 2.5 hours each week have a greater likelihood of lowering their cholesterol levels.

For those with severe cases of high cholesterol, a physician may order additional tests and recommend a prescription medication to help lower cholesterol levels. The clinical laboratory at Willapa Harbor Hospital is equipped to perform comprehensive medical screenings.

“The lab at Willapa Harbor Hospital is very convenient for both patients and medical providers,” Dr. Hill explains. “With the capability to perform many screenings in-house, the hospital’s lab is very convenient. Plus, since insurance policies cover most of the fees, your medical provider might also recommend other lab work as part of an overall health exam.”

Education about cholesterol is key. Individuals are encouraged to do their research and talk with their primary medical providers about cholesterol and their risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

### **About Willapa Harbor Hospital**

Founded in 1954, Willapa Harbor Hospital serves the healthcare needs of north Pacific County residents. The hospital offers a wealth of medical services, including in-patient care, a Level V 24-hour trauma center, advanced radiology services (including CT, MRIs, ultrasound, and mammograms), an outpatient lab, surgical services, diabetic education, and more. Pacific Family Health Center and Willapa Harbor Hospital Clinic are medical clinics that are both operated by Willapa Harbor Hospital. For more information, please visit [www.willapaharborhospital.com](http://www.willapaharborhospital.com).

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