

Lipoprotein (a)

What is lipoprotein (a)? (pronounced lipoprotein 'little a')

Lp(a) is a lipoprotein rich in cholesterol. It is very similar in structure to LDL cholesterol found in the blood.

Lp(a) has an additional protein attached called apolipoprotein (a) which is made in the liver.

How common is elevated Lp(a)?

Elevated levels of Lp(a) are found in approximately 1 in 5 people (20% of the population) and most do not know they have high levels unless they have specifically been tested.

How do you get elevated Lp(a)?

Elevated Lp(a) levels are predominantly related to genetics and the chance of inheriting elevated Lp(a) from a parent is around 50%. It affects males and females equally.

How is elevated Lp(a) diagnosed?

Elevated Lp(a) levels may have been discovered during testing for the following reasons:

- One of your close family members has been diagnosed with elevated Lp(a).
- You have been diagnosed with familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH) and then had your Lp(a) level checked as part of your management.
- Your healthcare provider requested testing that included a blood test to know your Lp(a) level.

Why is it important to be aware of elevated Lp(a)?

Lp(a) is a 'sticky type' of cholesterol that can adhere to the heart's arterial walls leading to development of atherosclerosis (hardening and narrowing of the arteries caused by a build-up of cholesterol-causing plaque).

The risk of developing cardiovascular disease in people with elevated Lp(a) is 2 to 4 times greater than those unaffected.

While it is important for all members of the general population to ensure they maintain a lifestyle that decreases their lifetime risk of developing cardiovascular disease, it is particularly important for people with elevated Lp(a) levels.



Management

There are currently no medications that can significantly reduce your Lp(a), however there are several promising new treatments being currently researched and trialled.

While no treatment for elevated Lp(a) is currently available, to maintain your heart health it is important to reduce the impact of any other cardiovascular risk factors.

Following a heart healthy lifestyle is encouraged from an early age and will help to reduce other heart disease risk factors.

A heart healthy lifestyle includes:

- eating a healthy diet low in saturated and trans-fat and with plant sterols
- getting regular exercise (helps raise levels of good cholesterol)
- maintaining a healthy weight
- not vaping or smoking
- avoiding alcohol.

Contraception

When considering contraception, please advise your general practitioner that you have elevated Lp(a) and they will discuss suitable options with you.

Low oestrogen or progesterone only contraceptive options are generally recommended.

Please refer to the [FH Australia](#) website for more detailed information.

The FH team at Perth Children's Hospital can be contacted at pch.lipidclinic@health.wa.gov.au if you have any questions.



Government of Western Australia
Child and Adolescent Health Service



Child and Adolescent Health Service
15 Hospital Avenue, Nedlands, WA, 6009.
Telephone: (08) 6456 2222
Produced by: Department of General Paediatrics, Familial
Hypercholesterolaemia
Ref: 1740 © CAHS Rev Feb 2026

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