FH is caused by a genetic variant inherited from one or rarely both parents (…You are born with it!).

Regardless of who you are or where you or your family members come from, FH is present in 1 out of 250 individuals. It is caused by a genetic variant inherited from one or rarely both parents (You are born with it!). Because this condition is inherited, a parent with FH has a 50% chance of passing on the condition to a child.

Cholesterol is essential for health. It comes from 2 sources: 1) most of it is produced in your body and 2) some comes from the foods and snacks you eat. Individuals with FH cannot remove cholesterol efficiently from their bloodstream. As a result, the level of cholesterol becomes very high, causing cholesterol to accumulate which eventually damages the blood vessels. Higher levels of cholesterol and longer exposure result in the greatest damage to blood vessels. While children rarely experience symptoms because of their young age, damage to their blood vessels begins as early as 8 years of age!

FH can be easily diagnosed with a simple blood test called a “lipid panel”. This test can be performed any time of the day, with or without fasting. Medications are required to lower the cholesterol level because FH is a genetic disorder where your body is unable to clear the cholesterol normally. While helpful and encouraged, genetic testing to confirm the presence of a genetic variant is optional.

Among those with FH, in addition to a heart healthy lifestyle, treatment with a cholesterol lowering medication is recommended if the LDL-C or “bad cholesterol” remains 1) 160 mg/dL or higher and there is a family history of premature coronary heart disease or 2) 190 mg/dL or higher in the absence of a known family history of premature coronary heart disease.

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