

Almost 60% of Delhiites have abnormal lipid levels, an analysis of over 1200 patients across ~15 pincodes in Delhi revealed. Among patients tested, 33% had very high lipid levels and 25% had high lipid levels. While fasting blood sugar was 103mg/dl in those with normal lipid levels, which itself is considered as a pre-diabetic state, in those with high lipid levels, fasting blood sugar rose to 107mg/dl, and further to 113mg/dl in those with very high lipid levels. Average creatinine, a marker of kidney function, also increased across these categories, indicating how organ function deterioration was correlated with lipid and sugar levels.

High blood lipid levels have many effects. They travel in the blood, depositing on the walls of the blood vessels as they pass. As the diameter of these blood vessels get narrower and narrower, blood supply to vital organs like heart and brain reduces. These could lead to heart attacks and strokes.

As Delhi grows more urbanized, its residents grow more obese, and combined with high blood sugar and lipid levels, become afflicted by the metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome comprises of those with increased waistline, abnormal lipid levels (high triglycerides, low HDL), increased blood sugar and high blood pressure. The present study found that 9% of all persons who tested their lipids and blood sugar had reports suggestive of metabolic syndrome. Apart from heart disease, these people are also at higher risk of fatty liver, increased uric acid levels, infertility (PCOD) and sleep difficulties (obstructive sleep apnoea). The study also showed correlation between increasing triglyceride and fasting blood sugar and decreasing HDL, a cardio-protective lipid. This meant that if one risk factor was present, the risk of having other factors also increased.

The greatest challenge for these diseases is that they are silent killers. High blood lipids and blood sugar have few or no symptoms and its presence is detected often only after the first heart attack or stroke, when the damage has been done. American heart Association recommends periodic screening of lipid levels as well as blood sugar to ensure early detection and treatment, especially if you have other risk factors like obesity or a family history of heart disease. Else you might be silently progressing toward a heart attack or a stroke. Healthy eating and exercise are also important in prevention. Your health is in your hands. You won't need to treat if you prevent!

Blood Lipid levels in Delhi: The silent killer in our blood

