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“26 IMPORTANT THINGS *You* MUST KNOW ABOUT CHOLESTEROL!”

**TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE A LONGER,
HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER LIFE... VISIT:**

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1. Introduction; Cholesterol - The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Understanding cholesterol and how it affects the body can be a tricky subject, since there are two different types of cholesterol. Generally, when we talk about having high cholesterol, we mean the “bad” kind, commonly called LDL cholesterol. By studying the LDL cholesterol and learning the results of high LDL cholesterol in your body, you can help keep yourself healthy and prevent things such as strokes and heart attacks, both of which can potentially be fatal.

Cholesterol is something that we need in the body. This substance is a soft, waxy fat found in the blood stream and used in the production of cell membrane and hormones. Without some amount of cholesterol in our bodies, we would die. However, cholesterol is produced in the liver, and so it is rarely necessary that we need to ingest extra amounts of this substance in order to live. Unfortunately, high amounts of cholesterol are found in many foods, leading some people to develop hypercholesterolemia, or high cholesterol.

High cholesterol isn't actually the problem - the result, however, is, and this can be a very serious problem. Cholesterol is carried through the blood stream to all parts of your body by low density lipoprotein (LDL). When there is extra cholesterol in the body, the body produces extra lipoprotein to carry it to and from different parts of the body. These lipoproteins can be dangerous in large numbers. When there's too much in the blood stream, the body cannot absorb it and it sticks to the walls of your veins and arteries, growing hard and creating what is called plaque. If too much plaque builds up on your blood vessels' walls, it can completely block off the blood flow to the heart, causing a heart attack. A chunk of the plaque could also break off and travel up the blood stream until the vessels get too small, near the brain. This cuts off the blood supply to the brain, causing a stroke. In either case, too much plaque can be fatal.

Generally, high cholesterol can be controlled through diet and medication. Your doctor can help you find a plan of action that works for you. Not all cholesterol is bad, so if you're a healthy person in general, watching your trans fat intake and the amount of high-level cholesterol foods you eat, such as seafood and egg yolks, should be enough to keep your LDL cholesterol at a healthy level.

2. Battle of the Sexes: Cholesterol Differences Between Men and Women

Although some might deny that there are differences between the cholesterol of the sexes, there truly are some that you should know about if you suffer from high cholesterol. Many scientists have been hard at work determining the differences between men and women in the aspect of cholesterol. Men and women have different hormones, and so cholesterol works in different ways. It is important to research these differences to learn about how this steroid works within your own body.

Men are less likely to watch what they eat, and a lot less likely to exercise for its health benefits and more for the aspect of attracting the opposite sex. They are also a lot less likely to go to the doctor for a problem that could be something serious. For these reasons men run a higher risk of having high cholesterol at an earlier age.

Women are more likely to lead a healthier lifestyle. However, this doesn't mean that they are not at risk for having high cholesterol or avoiding heart disease. In fact, women are less likely to respond quickly to a heart attack than men. Even though many women think that breast cancer is the top health risk for their gender, this is actually not true- it's actually heart disease. So many women

believe that breast cancer is the number one health concern that they will deny they are having a heart attack, even as it is occurring. This is why drastically higher numbers of women die of their first heart attack when compared to the number of male fatalities for the same reason.

While men and women are different, one thing is the same for both sexes; it's never too soon to start concerning yourself with maintaining a healthy cholesterol level. Diet should always be strict if you have had high cholesterol at any time. Saturated fats, trans fats, sugar, and alcohol are believed to be dietary factors that increase bad cholesterol in the body. Staying active will also maintain a healthy amount of cholesterol in many ways. It keeps your weight under control, and has been believed to increase the amount of "good" cholesterol in the body so that it is better able to dispose of harmful cholesterol. Fiber supplements could also be added to daily meals because it binds to the bad cholesterol and helps you dispose of it rather than absorb it into the blood stream. There are many things that can be done to keep high cholesterol under control. It is important to see your doctor and figure out what is best for you.

3. Alternative Cholesterol-lowering Medicines

You see commercials daily for cholesterol-lowering prescription medications. In fact, if you have seen your doctor about high cholesterol, then he has probably discussed one of these drugs with you. There are alternatives, however, and many you can get over the counter. Most alternative cholesterol-lowering medicines are natural supplements you can find in any health food or vitamin store. If you are considering taking an over-the-counter supplement or drug, you should consult your decisions with your doctor as any medication you are currently on may interact with an over-the-counter drug.

One supplement that is known to reduce cholesterol levels is red rice yeast. Red rice yeast contains a statin drug, which are used in nearly all prescription cholesterol-lowering drugs out today. Another common supplement thought to help lower cholesterol is Vitamin B3 or Niacin. Niacin helps to lower LDL levels while raising HDL levels. There are side effects associated with Niacin, though, such as nausea or liver damage. If you choose to take Niacin, you should certainly consult with your physician. Pantethine, a form of Vitamin B5, is also proven to lower cholesterol. In comparison to other alternative medicines, it is said to be highly effective in lowering triglyceride levels. In addition, guggul is an extract from a tree native to India which has been proven to lower LDL levels while increasing HDL levels. Some even claim that guggul can lower your cholesterol as much as prescription drugs do.

Beyond these supplements, there are herbs and foods that can help lower cholesterol. Garlic has been shown to effectively reduce cholesterol levels. One clove a day or an equivalent amount is the recommended dosage. If you do not like garlic, you can take garlic supplements, available in health food stores or vitamin shops. Recently, grape skins and seeds have also been proven to lower cholesterol levels. Thus, grapeseed oil and even wine can help with your cholesterol problem. Soy is also thought to reduce cholesterol levels because of its high polyunsaturated fats and its ability to limit the amount of cholesterol in your bloodstream.

In researching alternative medicines for lowering cholesterol, you will find that many of these drugs are available in health food stores or vitamin shops. If you are considering adding one of these alternatives to your diet, please remember that the Food and Drug Administration does not oversee the purity of vitamins or supplements available over-the-counter. Many with high cholesterol swear by these natural remedies, but you should consult your physician when you begin taking any of these drugs to ensure that you do not accidentally mix drugs which may cause harmful

side effects.

4. Beware of Blindness: High Cholesterol Concerns in Diabetic Patients

If you have diabetes, a condition in which the body and the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, you may be at risk for vision problems, about which your doctor has probably warned you already. Recently, it has been discovered that if you also have high cholesterol, you are much more likely to be visually effected due to your diabetes. This condition, called macular edema can be very debilitating, and so if you have both diabetes and high cholesterol, you should watch your diet very closely to avoid losing your sense of sight.

Macular edema may occur in either one or both eyes, causing vision loss or blindness because water accumulates in the macula of the eye. High glucose levels in the bloodstream, which happens when your body does not produce insulin, puts you at a greater risk for developing macular edema, and the surgery to relieve this condition, if it is even possible, is dangerous and difficult. Studies that have been done recently have shown that diabetics who also suffer from high cholesterol are much more likely to develop macular edema.

It is important to note that there is both good and bad kinds of cholesterol. Good cholesterol is needed in the body, and is called HDL. Bad cholesterol, called LDL, produces excess lipoproteins in the blood stream, which build up on blood vessel walls. This is the most common cause of heart attacks and is also sometimes responsible for strokes, so anyone seeking a healthy lifestyle should be watching cholesterol intake. Because diabetic patients are two to four times more likely to develop macular edema if they also have high levels of LDL cholesterol in the blood stream, they need to be extra careful about their diets. Foods such as eggs, fish, and milk contain lots of bad cholesterol. Foods high in trans fats are also culprits for LDL cholesterol. Although we do need some LDL cholesterol in our body for things such as cell membrane production, our livers produce most, if not all, of what we need.

By avoiding foods high and cholesterol, diabetic patients can help keep their vision safe by preventing macular edema. However, low cholesterol diets are important for everyone to stay fit and healthy. Check your cholesterol levels by using a home testing kit or, more accurately, by seeing your doctor. By staying healthy, you can prevent not only macular edema, but also other serious health problems.

5. Cholesterol's Brother: Triglycerides

When learning how to become healthier by lowering your cholesterol, you may also want to check your body's levels of a similar fat in the body, triglyceride. Cholesterol and triglyceride are both lipids that your body needs to survive. However, if you do not maintain healthy levels of the fats in your body, both cholesterol and triglyceride, you could be at risk of heart attack and stroke. Most people have their doctor check cholesterol levels, but if you want to stay heart-healthy, inquire about your triglyceride level as well, if your doctor has not already informed you of it.

Triglycerides are normally measured as part of your cholesterol test. This level appears as a fourth number, after HDL (good) cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and total cholesterol. Unfortunately, medical research has only recently been started on the effects of triglycerides in the blood stream. Usually, elevated levels of triglyceride go hand in hand with low levels of HDL

cholesterol and high levels of LDL cholesterol, so it is apparent that lower levels of triglycerides are better for your body. However, it is not yet apparent if triglycerides are contributing to the problems of high LDL cholesterol or if high levels are a symptom of high LDL cholesterol. Because studies are still in the works, doctors vary on their recommendations when facing patients with high triglyceride levels. Most of the time, lowering high LDL cholesterol and raising low HDL cholesterol brings triglyceride levels back into a normal range with no additional work.

However, in some special cases, high levels of triglyceride are being treated in patients. Normally, a person has a triglyceride level reading of lower than 150. Anything above 150 is considered high, with levels above 500 being extremely high and dangerous. Most of the patients treated for high triglyceride levels suffer from metabolic syndrome X, a genetic condition that also causes high LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol, hypertension, abnormal blood clotting, and insulin resistance. Because of this, patients suffering from metabolic syndrome X are at an extremely high risk for heart attack. High triglyceride levels are mainly treated with weight loss, exercise, and medication, although diet is a factor as well. If you believe that you suffer from this disease, or would like to better understand your levels of cholesterol and triglyceride, talk to your family doctor. He or she can perform a simple blood test and measure the levels of lipids in your blood to see if you are staying heart-healthy. If not, speak to your doctor about changing your diet and exercise to live a healthier lifestyle and about the many possible medications you may need.

6. Cooking for a Low Cholesterol Diet

High cholesterol levels require a number of lifestyle changes, including modifying your diet. To do this, a slight change in the way you cook may be necessary. Cooking for a low cholesterol diet is not difficult, but you will have to use some different techniques and food choices to keep you heart healthy.

In general with cooking, baking, broiling, grilling, even microwaving will help control the amount of saturated fat in your food. A light stir-fry or sauté is acceptable, but only with a controlled amount of oil. In addition, limit the amount of high-saturated fat products in your house and stock up on alternatives such as herbs or wine.

Another component to a low cholesterol diet is lean meat and poultry. When cooking meat and poultry, you can reduce the saturated fat in meat by trimming off all of the fat you see. Also, instead of frying, try to broil, roast, or bake the meat. If you roast or bake, try using a rack to drain off the fat so that you do not end up consuming this with the meat. Wine, lemon juice, vinegar, or a fat-free or low-fat oil marinade can help with keeping the meat moist while adding a wonderful flavor. Do you love your stews and soups? Cook these the day before and refrigerate; this allows the fat to rise to the top and harden, which you can remove before reheating.

A key part of a low cholesterol diet is a variety of fruits and vegetables. Look for fresh fruits that you can use as snacks or chop up and freeze for later. With vegetables, you have to remember to limit your sodium intake. To flavor vegetables then, use herbs and spices. You can buy already mixed seasonings in the grocery store – such as Italian herb seasonings, which includes oregano, rosemary, basil, and other tasty herbs. Moreover, parsley, cilantro, and chives can offer unique flavors. When you cook vegetables, use a small amount of vegetable oil or a vegetable oil spray. If you find you need more liquid, use water instead of oil. Also, if you must use oils in your cooking, try not to use margarine or salted butter, as these are both high in saturated fats and sodium – a double combination of bad foods for a low cholesterol diet.

These are just a few cooking tips for your new diet. Though it may take a little more time to

prepare and cook than simply frying up some meat and veggies, the food will not only taste better, but improve your heart health.

7. Exercising to Lower Your Cholesterol

If you have high cholesterol levels, you have probably heard the phrase “low saturated-fat diet” more often than you care to hear. However, adopting such a diet is not the only lifestyle change you will need to make to lower your cholesterol. Exercise is necessary when you have been diagnosed with high cholesterol levels.

Exercise helps lower cholesterol levels in a number of ways. Physical activity increases the HDL levels in your system, while decreasing LDL levels. Exercise also helps the circulation in your body, which can help the flow of blood through your system and reduce clogged arteries. Studies have shown that a low saturated-fat diet with a moderate amount of exercise is key to significantly lowering cholesterol levels. Furthermore, regular physical activity has been proven to increase a particular enzyme in your system that helps remove cholesterol from your bloodstream.

Only a moderate amount of physical activity is necessary, though you may choose to follow a more strenuous routine. Moderate physical activity means about 30 minutes per day of some aerobic activity, such as jogging, walking briskly, or swimming. These aerobic activities are great for increasing your heart rate and helping improve your blood circulation. If this seems like a large task, you can break this minimum 30 minutes of exercise into smaller amounts. Take 10 minutes at lunch to do a brisk walk around the office. After work, take another 10 to vacuum your house (just make sure that this will increase your heart rate.) And then maybe take 10 minutes at night for jumping jacks while you catch the evening news.

Again, you can follow a more strenuous routine, with some weight training. This will help you lose more weight than aerobic exercise alone. Building muscle mass through weight training continues to exercise those muscles, and thus burn calories, even after you have stopped. Most often, when losing weight, fat is burned off first. In this way, losing weight can help reduce cholesterol significantly by eliminating those fats that help clog the arteries and increase LDL levels. You do not have to start lifting 20 pound weights, though. You can buy small 1, 2, or 3 pound wrist bands that can wrap around your wrist or ankle; then go for a walk. This will help increase your heart rate and give your arms and legs a little more to work against.

Lowering cholesterol takes a number of lifestyle changes, but they do not have to be abrupt changes. If you have not participated in any physical activity, then you should be careful to jump into a strenuous exercise routine. Start off slowly and recognize when your heart is beating fast. A combined low saturated-fat diet with moderate physical activity will not only help lower cholesterol but it will help you become healthier overall.

8. Fats and Your Cholesterol

When discussing cholesterol, fat always comes into the conversation. For those with higher cholesterol, it is recommended that they eat a low saturated-fat diet. Low fat diets are often encouraged, even for general health purposes. However, there are healthy fats that can help lower cholesterol.

To lower your cholesterol, you should reduce your total fat intake. This is often recommended to reduce the amount of saturated fats you are consuming, which most Americans consume in large quantities. Saturated fats raise both your LDL and HDL cholesterol levels. They are often found in meat fats, such as dairy products like butter, cream, or ice cream. These fats can also be found on pieces of meat to be cooked and can be removed simply by cutting them off before cooking.

While certain oils like canola oil or olive oil are acceptable for a low cholesterol diet, other oils, such as palm oil or coconut oil, contain high levels of saturated fat. Cocoa butter, a key component in chocolate, is also high in saturated fats. Oftentimes, these oils are found in processed sweets, such as cookies or cake mixes. These processed foods are labeled, so you can determine how much saturated fat each serving contains.

Worse than saturated fats are trans fats, which can be found more increasingly in processed, pre-packaged foods. It is recommended to not consume any trans fat, as your body is unable to fully process trans fat; thus, you will not be able to exercise this fat off. Furthermore, it raises LDL levels while reducing HDL levels, which clogs the arteries more quickly.

However, cutting down on your caloric fat intake doesn't mean cutting fat out of your diet altogether. Unsaturated fats may actually help lower your cholesterol levels. There are a few types of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. In a low cholesterol diet, doctors recommend substituting unsaturated fats for saturated fats whenever possible. Both unsaturated fats lower LDL levels while increasing HDL levels. Polyunsaturated fats can be found in vegetable oils such as corn, soybean, or safflower. Olive oil and canola oil are high in monounsaturated fats and can be used in cooking as well as salad dressings.

Controlling your diet is a priority when it comes to lowering your cholesterol levels. Understanding the types of fats you can consume and those you should not consume is important. Just remember that unsaturated fats should be substituted for saturated or trans fats whenever possible.

9. Have a Healthy Living Plan

Everyone who has ever tried to diet or exercise knows just how hard it is to keep that promise that you make to yourself about staying with the program. It's not an easy thing to do—we fall out of routine with some of the most simple of tasks, and dieting and exercising may not be your idea of fun activities. The most important thing to remember is that you're not the only person who has difficulty sticking to your exercise program.

Whether you are young or old, diet and exercise are two of the most important aspects of life that cannot go unattended if you plan on living to an old age and maintaining a good cholesterol level. Something you might consider is keeping a notebook in the room in which you record your exercise. While it won't guarantee that you exercise daily, it will serve as a handy reminder to keep up with the days in which you exercise. You see, if you are doing something every day, eventually it will become a habit and you won't even realize that your helpful notebook reminded you to exercise. Sometimes this little extra assurance is all you need to keep you reminded of your next workout routine. This way, you can keep track of your progress as well.

In addition to the notebook, you may even consider writing down the days in which you plan on exercising on your calendar. Be sure that it is located someplace you will see it, like by the pantry where you prepare healthy meals. Be sure to make a realistic exercise plan that works with

your schedule so that you will have no trouble maintaining it throughout the month. In the event that you miss a day, be sure to mark it on the calendar so that you remember how many times you have missed, and try not to exceed that number next month until you have reached perfect exercise day attendance.

Maintaining healthy eating habits and exercise routines can help you keep a great cholesterol level and keep your body fit. Sometimes we forget or just get too busy to do that workout, just remember that one day does not make you a failure, it doesn't even mean that you have to work out extra hard next time. Just be certain to make an extra effort to exercise on the next day planned. Use rewards to inspire yourself, and soon you will see the benefits of your new healthy lifestyle.

10. How You Can Get High Cholesterol From Your Parents

Did you know that your high cholesterol could be hereditary? Scientists have linked some people's high cholesterol to a specific genetic defect. However, don't place the blame on your genes just yet; it's important to know all the facts about this defect and how it can be treated first.

Familial hypercholesterolaemia, or "FH," means that you are lacking the low-density lipoprotein receptors that get rid of cholesterol in your bloodstream. Typical healthy people have these receptors, and they are the key element to a healthy body function that regulates cholesterol levels automatically. Inherited high cholesterol begins to take effect at birth and can lead to the early development of atherosclerosis and vascular diseases. If you have this defective high cholesterol gene, you are at least 50% likely to pass the risk on to your children. It is not possible for this defective gene to skip a generation, so if your parents do not have FH that means you are not at risk for having this disease or passing it on to your children.

All of the cells of your body, and especially in the liver, contain a tiny receptor that allows low-density lipoprotein cholesterol to be removed from the bloodstream. If you have FH, then this means that the tiny receptors have a defect, which allows the low-density lipoprotein cholesterol to build up in the blood and clog your arteries. This in turn can lead to stroke or heart attack.

If you have FH, you cannot tell that your cholesterol level is abnormal. However, you may have symptoms that result from the clogging of arteries. A crushing feeling behind your chest that stretches to your arm or neck is one of the most common symptoms. If this symptom presents itself more and more frequently and becomes severe then it is probably a serious sign that you may be on the verge of an acute coronary thrombosis, or heart attack. If this is the case then you need to seek medical attention right away.

Get your cholesterol levels tested and let doctors know that high cholesterol runs in your family if this is the case. They will do all the needed tests to determine if you have FH or not. If you know that you have FH then it is important that you eat healthy and stay far away from high fat content. Remember, your body doesn't handle the low-density lipoproteins like everyone else's body does, so it is important that you eat a more healthy diet and exercise regularly.

11. Is There Good Cholesterol?

We hear a lot about bad cholesterol in our bodies, but did you know there is a good

cholesterol as well? High density lipoproteins, which are commonly referred to as HDL, are what carry cholesterol into your body's liver. They are considered to be the good type of cholesterol that your body needs to remove cholesterol from your arteries so that it can be disposed of. It has been shown in studies that they aid in protecting your body from cardiovascular diseases and strokes. These high density lipoproteins vary in size and the largest are considered to be the most helpful because they are solely responsible for carrying the cholesterol so that it can leave the body rather than clog your arteries.

You can have a test done by your doctor in order to determine if you have a good amount of high density lipoproteins present in your body so that you will be best protected against heart disease. There will be a series of tests conducted so that you can have a full lipid chart done. After fasting for at least 12 hours, your physician will be able to best determine your levels of HDL, LDL, cholesterol, and triglycerides. Once these numbers are established they will assess your overall needs when it comes to cholesterol levels.

If your doctor finds that you need to make changes in order to get your HDL levels higher, there are a few things that you can do. These include physical activity and important dietary changes. Your doctor may decide that you are not within your desirable weight range, which could be a major contributing factor in high levels of cholesterol. Exercising and losing weight could be very helpful. This is because burning off some of the bad amounts of cholesterol will allow the good cholesterol to be most effective in disposing of harmful cholesterol. Foods high in saturated and trans fats should be avoided. Replace these types of foods with polyunsaturated fats and fiber instead.

A lipid test is the most accurate way for your doctor to determine if you are at risk due to high levels of LDL, and low amounts of HDL. Causes of dangerously high cholesterol could include heredity, poor diet choices, smoking, being over your ideal weight range, and physical inactivity. It is important to stay under supervision of your doctor to get back into a good range. You should also make it a point to continue to make healthier choices in order to avoid heart disease, stroke, or other heart related problem that may occur in the future.

12. Make Every Appointment Count

If you've recently been diagnosed with high cholesterol, it is important to see your doctor regularly. Your doctor, like almost every doctor around the world, is probably a very busy person, and if you wake up in the middle of the night and have a question or concern, he or she probably does not have the time to speak with you again until your next appointment unless it is an emergency. To prevent this from happening, be sure to be prepared for every checkup. Being prepared for an examination can also help take away the anxiety some people feel when faced with an impending doctor's office visit.

First, write down a list of anything you need to tell your doctor. Has your condition worsened or improved? Have you been feeling any side effects from medications he or she has prescribed? What other medications or dietary supplements have you been taking that he or she might not know about? This is especially useful if you are taking many medications as well as those to help lower your high cholesterol. Don't expect to remember them all with the dosages when you get to the examination—its better to writer it down. Also note any concerns you have or questions you've thought of since your last visit. It's a good idea to keep a running list somewhere handy where you can add questions as they arise and then get them answered all at once.

Next, prepare yourself for personal questions. You doctor does not judge, and although

many questions he or she may ask might make you feel uncomfortable, they can help him or her know the best course of action to take in any given situation. Your doctor and you have a confidentiality agreement, so he or she cannot report you for drug use or other risky or illegal behavior in most cases. It may make you feel more comfortable to see a doctor of the same sex, so remember this when scheduling an appointment.

Lastly, be open to new suggestions. Ask your doctor questions about your current treatment and then ask what other courses of action you may also take to help lower your cholesterol or treat any other sort of disease or disorder. Don't be afraid to tell your doctor that you don't understand a particular idea—he or she has had many years of schooling and experience and may forget that you don't know some of the terms he or she uses daily. If at any time your doctor refuses to explain something to you or asks you inappropriate questions, seek other medical professional options. However, by being prepared, you can make the most out of your examination and keep your body in the healthiest condition possible.

13. Nicotinic Acid and Your Health

High cholesterol is known to cause strokes and heart disease without external physical warning. You cannot see cholesterol, which is why it is important to have your doctor check your level before it's too late. Nicotinic Acid, which is more commonly known as Niacin, is a vitamin that is commonly prescribed to help with poor cholesterol levels. It is proven to lower the bad cholesterol and raise the amount of good cholesterol in your body to prevent negative effects of cholesterol.

It is important to understand the causes of high cholesterol and how to prevent it from becoming dangerous. We've all heard that it has to do with what we eat, but what really causes it? For the most part, high bad cholesterol is caused by certain foods we put into our bodies, although it can also run in families. Hereditary causes of high cholesterol are much more difficult to control than ones caused by food and lifestyle choices. Nicotinic acid can regulate the amount of good and bad cholesterol present in your body, even in cases of bad genetics.

The nicotinic acid vitamin can be purchased without a prescription, but it is required to be taken in large regular doses in order to be effective. The only dangerous side effect of taking large doses is possible liver damage. Niaspan is a medication that has the same effects of nicotinic acid but without the risk of liver damage. You should always take nicotinic acid under the supervision of a doctor whether you are taking prescription dosages or not.

Factors that you can control for a healthier cholesterol level are strict diet, exercise, and weight management. When shopping for food, keep in mind that high-fat, salt, and sugar are the main causes of high cholesterol due to diet. Fiber and healthy, natural foods are always a good choice to add into your meal plan. Always balance your diet and do not substitute snacks for meals. Your doctor can assist you best in weight management because they can help you determine the ideal weight for you. Regular physical activity will help you stay in shape and can also help you to burn off some of the bad cholesterol and raise your good cholesterol levels.

People of all ages, weights, lifestyles, and sexes can have dangerous, high cholesterol. Everyone should visit their doctor to be sure that they are living a healthy life and doing what is necessary to stay out of risk. If you are at risk for having a heart attack, stroke, or heart disease there are ways to eliminate the risk as much as possible. Nicotinic acid is one of the most commonly prescribed vitamins that can be found in many forms in order to regulate your cholesterol level.

15. Self-Testing Options for High Cholesterol Patients

High cholesterol problems are common among Americans, due in part to our generally bad diets. Once you turn 18, you should have your cholesterol levels checked every five years, and more often if you are at risk for heart attacks or have a family history of poor cholesterol health. If you are concerned about your cholesterol levels, one option you have is to purchase and use a self-testing kit. These kits are available at your local pharmacy or through your doctor, and when used correctly they can help you monitor the changes in your blood cholesterol levels, especially if you are making extreme lifestyle changes in order to help yourself get back to a healthy cholesterol level.

Before you test your own cholesterol, research the many options you have. First, you need to learn a little about cholesterol levels and what they tell you about your health. There are three or more different cholesterol readings that your doctor takes to review your health. HDL cholesterol, commonly called “good cholesterol” is one type, and your levels of this kind of cholesterol should be 40 or higher. On the other hand, LDL cholesterol, commonly called “bad cholesterol” should be kept lower, at 130 for those in good health with no family history of heart attacks or stroke and at 100 or lower if your family does have a history of heart attacks or stroke. Your cholesterol report may include other numbers as well, but these are the two most important ones to monitor.

However, most home testing kits only give you a total cholesterol reading. This number should be under 200 and includes not only HDL and LDL numbers, but other considerations as well. Therefore, you may suffer from high LDL cholesterol and low HDL cholesterol, but the total number shows a cholesterol level that is fine. This can be very misleading. Some self-testing kits are now adding other reading options to make this process easier, but if you aren't knowledgeable about the many different kinds of cholesterol, this can be confusing.

Be sure to follow the directions to your self-testing kit very carefully. When done correctly, this method of testing your cholesterol is as accurate as if it had been done at a doctor's office or hospital. Remember that some companies have better products than others, so do your research on each kit available on the market. You will be required to prick your finger to test your cholesterol, so if blood makes you squeamish, this may not be a good option for you. In the end, home testing kits cannot replace analysis by a health care professional, so make an appointment with your family doctor if you expect your cholesterol levels to be unhealthy.

16. Statin Drugs: What are They and are They Safe?

The most commonly used type of medications used as an answer to high cholesterol are called statin drugs. Because they are so popular, numerous studies have been performed to ensure the safety and validity of these drugs, and it has been found that not only do they lower bad cholesterol (LDL) levels, but they also raise good cholesterol (HDL) levels in many cases. Statin drugs have little or no side effects associated with their long-term use, and taking them can reduce the risk of both heart attack and stroke. Consider talking to your doctor about the use of statin drugs if you have been diagnosed with poor cholesterol levels.

There are six statin drugs now on the market. Each of the major drug companies in the United States produces forms of these drugs, making them easy to get and use. Statin drugs you can

take by prescription from your doctor are rosuvastatin, fluvastatin sodium, atorvastatin calcium, lovastatin, pravastatin sodium, and simvastatin. Common names for these types of drugs that you might recognize include Zocor, Lipitor, and Lescol. Your doctor can recommend the exact medication that is right for you. In general, rosuvastatin and atorvastatin calcium are used for intensely lowering cholesterol, and may be taken in conjunction with other medications. Pravastatin sodium is safest to use in small doses if you suffer from liver disease. It is also important to abstain from drinking alcohol as well. Atorvastatin calcium and fluvastatin sodium are especially useful if you have kidney problems. Lovastatin, simvastatin, and pravastatin sodium are all proven to help reduce the risk of heart attacks, with pravastatin also helping to reduce the risk of strokes.

Statins all work by blocking the enzyme in the liver that causes your body to produce cholesterol. If you have excess cholesterol in your body, this actively prevents you from making more. You should not need to take statins to maintain already healthy cholesterol levels—this can be controlled through diet and exercise. Statins may cause a rare but serious disease called rhabdomyolysis, which damages muscles, so you should only use these drugs if you need them and they are prescribed by a doctor. If you already take statins and experience muscle weakness, consult your doctor—this is the number one sign of rhabdomyolysis and may progress to kidney failure and cause untimely death.

Overall, by keeping a close check on your own health, you can report any abnormalities to your doctor. Statin drugs are great tools to use if you need to lower your LDL cholesterol and raise your HDL cholesterol, but, as with most kinds of prescription drugs, they work best if you live a generally healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet, no smoking, and plenty of exercise every day.

17. The Dangers of Low Cholesterol

When doctors talk about cholesterol levels in a patient, it is usually because they fear that levels are too high. High cholesterol can lead to long-term health problems, including strokes and heart attacks. However, low cholesterol can be a health problem as well. Although this condition, officially called hypocholesterolemia, is very rare, and studies are still being done to confirm the health risks to low cholesterol. If you suffer from low levels it is important to research and talk to your doctor about methods to bring your cholesterol levels back to normal.

Many factors can contribute to low levels of cholesterol in the body. Anything lower than 160 mg/dL is considered abnormally low and should be carefully monitored by doctors. Some of the major contributors to hypocholesterolemia include hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid glands), liver disease, malabsorption (little or no nutrient absorption in the small intestines), celiac disease, malnutrition, and manganese deficiency. A small percentage of people also have very low levels of cholesterol in the blood stream due to abetalipoproteinemia, a rare genetic disease. Abetalipoproteinemia is a condition that mainly affects the Jewish population and not only causes low cholesterol levels, but also causes vitamin deficiencies and an inability to grow and gain weight at a normal rate. Another such disease that causes low cholesterol levels in the blood stream is hypobetalipoproteinemia, another rare genetic disease caused by a mutated gene. Low cholesterol, lastly, can be caused if medications used to treat high cholesterol are used improperly.

Although it is uncommon, there is a growing concern in the medical community about this kind of condition. In general, low cholesterol goes hand-in-hand with poor health. Thus, mortality rates rise with low cholesterol. Some common problems caused by low cholesterol may include

depression, respiratory diseases, cancer, and hemorrhagic stroke. However, studies are still being done to test theories about these problems and their link to low cholesterol levels in the body. Links to depression have been especially researched recently, and so if you suffer from depression, be sure to have your doctor check your cholesterol levels as well. Elderly patients should also be especially mindful of low cholesterol.

Overall, as with most nutrients in the body, cholesterol levels should be controlled but not limited. Unless you suffer from one of the aforementioned rare genetic diseases, you can control your cholesterol mainly by watching what you eat.

18. The First Step to a Healthy Lifestyle: Choosing a Doctor

If you have recently been diagnosed with high cholesterol, one of the people who will become most familiar with your body is your doctor. Therefore, it is important to choose a physician that you like and trust, so that checkups will seem like less of a chore. Your doctor is one of the most important people in your life, so by doing your research you can choose a physician and institute that makes you feel comfortable and works with your insurance plan or price range. The most important thing to remember is that, while you can change doctors at any time, you should try to stay with the same person so that he or she knows your health history and can more accurately treat you.

First, check on the facilities that are closest to your home in the event of an emergency. These are the hospitals where you will most likely be treated, and if there are multiple choices, visit them all and check for cleanliness and staff friendliness. Also notice the services they offer—some smaller hospitals have to send you somewhere else for special tests. From the hospitals you like best, you should be able to obtain lists of private physicians who are affiliated with the hospitals. Most times, you will want a location that is near to your home and accessible by public transportation in the event you are not able to drive yourself to and from treatments session. For a simple case of high cholesterol, this may not be a concern, but remember that your doctor may need to treat you in the future for other diseases as well. Location, although it is a major deciding factor, should not be the sole thing upon which you base your decision.

You may, for example, prefer one sex to the other when seeing a doctor. Regardless of sex, however, your doctor should be board certified and you can check with the state officials to see if he or she is in good standing. Also consider your doctor's specialties. If heart disease is something about which he or she is very comfortable, that doctor may be a good choice if you are trying to lower cholesterol. If you have a family, check if pediatricians are found at the same location as well, so that you can schedule family checkups. Overall, the key is to feel comfortable. Check out payment plans, scheduling procedures, other issues as well. Your care should be your doctor's primary concern, so if you feel this is not the case, find a new office to help you with your cholesterol problems.

19. The Math of Cholesterol: Adding up the Numbers to Check your Health

Checking your cholesterol used to be an easy affair, with your doctor reporting to you one number. However, as medical science has advanced, cholesterol knowledge has changed and three or more numbers are typically now reported. Getting more than one number can be confusing, and

even if your doctor explains it to you in the examination room, it is difficult to remember once you get home. This can also be confusing if you purchase a home cholesterol testing kit. The math of cholesterol is not as difficult as it seems, however, and by learning the differences between the numbers, you can understand how to keep your body healthy.

First, you will be given a number for LDL cholesterol, or low density lipoprotein cholesterol. This is commonly referred to as “bad cholesterol” and you can remember this by using the L to stand for Lower—you want to be sure to lower this type of cholesterol. LDL cholesterol makes up about 65-75% of your total cholesterol level, and everyone should seek for a number lower than 130. Because LDL cholesterol is the type that causes heart attacks, if you have other risk factors such as obesity or a family history of heart disease, you want to keep this number even lower, less than 100 if possible. Diet is the main way to lower high LDL levels.

The second number on your cholesterol report is your HDL cholesterol, or high density lipoprotein cholesterol. This is commonly referred to as “good cholesterol” and you can remember this by using the H to stand for healthy—high levels of HDL cholesterol are encouraged. A value of 35 or higher is recommended for men, and 40 or higher for women. Women have an easier time raising HDL levels than men do, but this can be done through exercise and not smoking.

The last number on your report will be a total cholesterol level, although if you add your LDL and HDL numbers, you will not get the total, as there are other cholesterol levels measured as well. It is most important to worry about LDL and HDL—if you keep these numbers at normal levels, your total cholesterol level will be fine. Consult your doctor if you have further questions, and remember that good cholesterol should not need to be dependent on medication. By exercising regularly, eating a low cholesterol diet, and living a healthy lifestyle, you can usually keep these levels under control.

20. The Power of Soy

In the last few years, the health benefits of including soy in your diet have been studied more and more. Vegetarians have been eating soy for decades, but now it is being researched not just as a substitute for those who do not wish to eat meat, but also as part of a healthy diet for patients with high cholesterol levels. Check with your doctor before adding soy to your diet, but remember this option if you’ve recently been diagnosed with high cholesterol.

Most doctors recommend replacing meat and other protein options with soy for about 25 grams of the daily nutritional amount of protein you need. At this rate, daily, soy has been proven to lower cholesterol. This was recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration as a valid option for reducing the risk of heart disease. Cholesterol clogs veins and arteries with a fatty substance that hardens to produce plaque; too much plaque in the arteries can close them completely, causing a heart attack. Eating soy reduces the amount of cholesterol in your blood stream, thus reducing the risk of plaque build-up and heart attack. Lowering the amount of cholesterol by eating more soy can also reduce your risk for having a stroke.

The health benefits of soy do not stop at lowering cholesterol, however. Soy is also very beneficial for menopausal women, since it increases estrogen levels, which, in turn, reduces the effects of menopause such as night sweats and hot flashes. Because it has been known to raise estrogen levels in the body, eating soy can also be very beneficial for men trying to treat prostate cancer. Studies are still being done, but many claim that soy boosts metabolism, shrinks fat cells, stabilizes levels of insulin in the body, helps people lose weight, and decreases sugar cravings.

Soy is a healthy food product, whether you are looking to help curb symptoms of

menopause, hoping to lower cholesterol levels in the blood stream, or generally attempting to eat a healthier diet. Your family doctor can tell you about many more health benefits of this product, and you should consult him or her when significantly adding soy to your diet to replace other sources of protein. Soy can work wonders for those who also eat a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, and grains, so it should be an option you consider to help pave the way to a longer and healthier life.

21. Three of a Kind: Fibrates

Fibrates, which are derived from fibric acid, are used to increase good cholesterol and decrease bad cholesterol in people who need to keep their high cholesterol under control. These medications lower the levels of fat in the blood that are the cause of dangerous high cholesterol levels. There are three types of fibrates—gemfibrozil, fenofibrate, and clofibrate. Each has its own unique characteristics that can lower high cholesterol, and your doctor will choose the one that will be safest and most effective for you. In those with very high levels of cholesterol in their body, these may be prescribed along with statins. No official studies have been done to compare each of the three medications. However each has unique side effects that may be important to patients with more than just high cholesterol problems.

Gemfibrozil is shown to reduce the risk of heart attack from high cholesterol or coronary artery disease. It is also effective in reducing the factors of those suffering from or in risk of developing metabolic syndrome. Fenofibrate has the lowest chance of side effects in the three medications. It is the safest to take with statins because it does not interfere with your bodies' ability to break them down. Clofibrate is the most dangerous and least prescribed of the three fibrates, but is prescribed when the other two medications do not effectively lower high cholesterol levels in the patient. The dangerous side effects include developing bile duct cancer and frequent gallstones.

This type of medication is usually recommended to those who have high levels of triglycerides. If not under control, this can cause diabetes, heart disease, and an under-active thyroid gland among many other dangerous conditions. Lifestyle changes are also part of high cholesterol therapy using fibrates. Saturated fats should be cut out of the diet completely, and high carbohydrates should also be avoided. Regular exercise will also keep the body in good shape while combating the bad cholesterol that is present.

Food, lifestyle, and genetics are the causing factors of dangerously high cholesterol levels in the body. Your doctor will decide if fibrates are ideal for your symptoms based on your needs and risk level. The side effects of fibrates are moderately low depending on which medication is prescribed to you. If your doctor decides that it is also necessary for you to take statins, some of the risk for certain side effects could be increased and it is always recommended that you stay under constant supervision of a doctor.

22. Using Cholesterol Absorption Inhibitors

Scientists have found that in order to fight the war on high cholesterol, they must learn to fight it at the source. By using cholesterol absorption inhibitors they are able to do just that. There have been many medications used to do the same things that these types of medications do, but none are quite as effective at lowering high cholesterol as the cholesterol absorption inhibitors.

First let's discuss how the body turns all cholesterol into harmful cholesterol. There are two types of cholesterol in the upper intestine. First you have dietary cholesterol that comes from all the food you eat. Then you have biliary, or bile, which is what is supplied to your digestive tract from your liver. These two elements combine together to form bile salt micelles. These salt micelles work in attracting cholesterol and are then absorbed by the intestine. After they are absorbed, they are headed back through the bloodstream to the liver where they are then secreted back into the blood as VLDL particles, precursors to low density lipoprotein. Low-density lipoproteins are the ones that are most harmful to your cholesterol levels.

With cholesterol absorption inhibitors, instead of your intestine absorbing the salt micelles, which ultimately would result in the production of LDL, most of the salt micelles uptake is blocked. When you reduce the cholesterol content that is delivered back to the liver, you effectively reduce the amount of LDL that your body is creating.

This has become one of the most popular forms of reducing cholesterol. Usually this medicine is given to individuals who cannot keep their cholesterol under control with proper exercise and diet. This is not a magic pill that will work on its own. Your doctor will also recommend that you start a new diet, one lower in sugar, saturated and trans fat; this is the most important aspect of assuring that this medication works correctly for you.

If you find that you have high cholesterol, it is best that you get help from your doctor in figuring out what the best treatment will be for you. Just like any other medication, all of these cholesterol absorption inhibitors have to be prescribed by a doctor, and rightfully so. Lowering your cholesterol has never been easier with today's medications taking leaps and bounds in the right direction every day, but remember that a healthy diet and plenty of exercise is the best way to live an overall healthy lifestyle.

23. What Are Bile Acid Sequestrants?

Lowering your cholesterol can be tricky. Scientists have found that in order to win this battle, sometimes you must out-trick the trickster. Bile acid sequestrants do just that. While they may not be as effective as using other methods, using them in combination with other medications has proven to reduce cholesterol levels by 50%.

Bile is a very important factor in ridding the body of cholesterol. You see, cholesterol is a major component of bile, but the bile gets absorbed back into the bloodstream once it is in the small intestine. Since the body is so very close to eliminating this cholesterol from the body the only thing that had to be done is stop the intestine from absorbing the cholesterol back into the bloodstream. This is where the bile acid sequestrant comes into play.

The body needs cholesterol to make bile, and your body is constantly hard at work producing bile daily. The bile acid sequestrant is active in the small intestine and binds to the bile, preventing the cholesterol from making another trip back to the liver. The medication and bile form into an insoluble complex and is excreted in the feces. This means that the next time your body produces bile; it will be doing so with new cholesterol. Every time you lose more bile in your feces you are lowering cholesterol.

Low doses are said to lower cholesterol by 10-15%, where as higher doses can reduce up to 25% of cholesterol. While this may not seem like a lot to most, people who suffer from high cholesterol see these numbers and are instantly intrigued. When this is combined with other medications like statins you will increase the percentage of cholesterol lost by up to 30%. However,

you may also be increasing your risk of developing rhabdomyolysis, the breaking down of skeletal muscle tissue. This is a serious side effect and for this very reason, prolonged use of the bile acid sequestrants with statins are not recommended by most doctors, even though the cholesterol levels are dramatically reduced, it is not a healthy alternative.

This is a prime example of how modern medicine is working with the body to alter already present functions and gain healthy results. When this medication is used by itself there are no serious side effects to worry about and this is something we can all be grateful for. While it may not reduce your cholesterol levels significantly, for those that need it, this medication is definitely what they have been waiting for.

24. What is a Stroke?

A stroke is a potentially deadly occurrence that happens when an artery leading to the brain becomes clogged or breaks. It commonly leaves the victim with either minor or major disabilities because brain cells die and cannot be repaired. The most common type of stroke is called an Ischemic stroke, which means it is caused by a clog in the artery. Depending on where this occurs in the brain, many different types of damage is potential. There are ways to prevent Ischemic stroke and it is important that you do everything that is necessary so that you do not suffer from life-altering disadvantages.

The right and left side of the brain control different parts of you. The two sides control the opposite side of the body so if paralysis occurs it will likely only be to one half of your body. If you have a stroke that affects the right part of your brain you will be at risk of losing vision. On the other hand, strokes affecting the left side may cause speech problems as a result. Any brain cells that die will cause memory loss and paralysis that may take over parts or the entire side of your body.

High cholesterol is a leading cause of stroke because bad cholesterol clogs arteries. It is also related directly to developing heart disease, which makes you susceptible to heart related problems, which include stroke and heart attack. Your doctor can test your cholesterol levels at any time in your life, and it is necessary to have this done before it is too late. Being overweight, smoking, poor diet, lack of physical activity, and genetics can all be causes of elevated levels that may cause you harm. Exercise and restrictive diet are the first suggestions that the doctor may give to bring your cholesterol level down to a manageable level. It may also be necessary to restrict your diet to get rid of sugars and saturated fats because they can cause elevated levels of bad cholesterol. There are also medications that the doctor may put you on if other methods of cholesterol control are ineffective.

Your best friend when it comes to health is a doctor. Annual physicals and check-ups can keep any risk factors in check, which include anything that puts you at risk for stroke. High cholesterol is known to be a risk and should be kept under control to prevent heart disease and stroke from happening.

25. What is VLDL Cholesterol?

Very low density lipoprotein cholesterol is commonly known as VLDL. This type of cholesterol contains high amounts of triglyceride. It is one of the unfavorable types of cholesterol because high levels of it put you at risk of developing coronary artery disease. When your doctor

refers to triglyceride levels, it is in direct relation with VLDL. For example, if you have a high level of triglycerides then you also have a high VLDL level.

Lowering and maintaining a low VLDL cholesterol level is desirable in order to avoid heart disease or suffering from a stroke. An important thing to remember is that you should avoid sugars and alcohol. Most people do not realize how much damage alcohol can do to one's body. Your liver produces triglycerides. This production is stimulated when you consume alcohol and it also hinders your bodies' ability to clear fats from the blood. Avoiding alcohol and sugar are not the only ways to be sure that you do not have a dangerous amount of VLDL cholesterol. Excess fat that is on your body is composed of triglycerides, which mean that if you maintain a suitable weight you will be limiting excess VLDL cholesterol. Exercise is always a favorable activity to raise amounts of good cholesterol so that they can combat the bad cholesterol.

Medications are also available if strict diet and exercise are not improving the level of triglycerides in your body. Gemfibrozil is the most commonly prescribed medication used to lower the levels of triglycerides. It is one of many types of fibrates, which are used to lower lipids in the body. As with most medications, there are side effects that may be undesirable, such as an upset stomach and dizziness. Niacin, which is a B vitamin, is a safer alternative that effectively lowers bad cholesterol and increases good cholesterol. Soy has been recommended by doctors because it lowers overall cholesterol levels, and also fiber because it prevents cholesterol from being absorbed into the bloodstream.

Every adult should visit their doctor to get their cholesterol levels tested. You may feel and appear to be healthy but cholesterol levels could be high due to uncontrollable factors such as heredity. VLDL cholesterol levels can be dangerous if they are too high because they can result in heart disease or stroke. If you have been tested previously and have since gained weight it is important to check back with your doctor because being overweight is one of the leading causes of increased high cholesterol.

26. What Kind of Lipid Altering Medication is Right for You?

High cholesterol is dangerous and can cause heart disease and other serious health problems such as stroke. Your doctor may suggest changing your diet and lifestyle, but for some people, that just isn't enough. Lipid altering medications may be prescribed to those who are having difficulty getting their high cholesterol under control and keeping it there. LDL cholesterol and triglycerides are what are known as undesirable lipids, and in large amounts they can cause you to be at risk for serious medical problems. There is no way to judge if you have high cholesterol or not without consulting your doctor. If you are at risk, medical professionals will know what to recommend as best for you and your situation.

Prescription lipid medications include statins, fibrates, and cholesterol absorption inhibitors. Statins lower cholesterol and assist in the prevention of cholesterol being produced within the body. They are commonly prescribed along with fibrates, which are lipid-lowering medications that mainly focus on eliminating triglycerides from the body. There are a few different types of fibrates, but gemfibrozil is most commonly prescribed because it is the most effective one that has the fewest possible side effects. Cholesterol absorption inhibitors are a fairly new addition to the fight against high cholesterol. They are safer for people who have had trouble with side effects of statins and are looking for an alternative. It lowers triglycerides and significantly reduces levels of bad cholesterol.

If you prefer a more natural form of lipid altering medication, there are also vitamins that

can be taken to reduce bad lipids and increase the amount of good lipids in the body. Niacin is a B vitamin that is taken in large doses in order to lower the total cholesterol amount, triglycerides, and bad cholesterol, as well as increasing the amount of good cholesterol. Although this is available without prescription, it can be dangerous because it must be taken in large amounts. Your doctor should monitor you so that they can see if your body is responding favorably and no additional problems arise. Fiber and soy are also natural things that you can consume to alter the amount of negative lipids in your body.

Prescription and natural lipid altering medications are effective in reducing the amount of bad cholesterol present in your body. High cholesterol can be devastating to your health and can cause serious problems such as heart disease to develop. Check with your doctor so that they can assist you in deciding what is right for you.

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