

## ***Cholesterol Myths***

There is a great deal of misinformation about cholesterol floating around these days. Most people have been misled to believe that cholesterol is a villain, when it is actually a hero, a very important substance involved in many important processes of the body. Cholesterol does not cause heart disease. It does help to produce cell membranes, hormones, vitamin D and bile acids to help you to digest fat. Cholesterol is also very important to the healthy function of the brain and nervous system and actually helps to keep your memory sharp.

Here are some interesting facts:

1. Cholesterol is a vital substance and you cannot be healthy without it.
2. Cholesterol is *not* the primary cause for heart disease. In fact, the real cause is rarely, if ever, addressed by doctors.
3. Your liver makes about 75 percent of your body's cholesterol. It is pointless to try to lower cholesterol by lowering dietary cholesterol intake.
4. Lowering your cholesterol with drugs is not effective in preventing a heart attack and leads to other health problems.
5. Getting your cholesterol too low may cause other serious health problems like depression, suicide, cancer and stroke.

The real cause of heart disease is inflammation. Inflammation in the arteries damages and weakens them, so the body creates a cholesterol “bandage” over the damaged area in an attempt to repair the tissue. The plaque, if it becomes large, can cause blockage of blood circulation, which will, of course lead to serious problems, but you will notice that if you didn’t have inflamed arteries, the body wouldn’t form the plaque in the first place. The real focus should be on reducing inflammation, not on blocking the repair process.

Numerous studies show that people who have their cholesterol lowered too much, have higher levels of depression, can become more violent, have higher rates of suicide, have greater risk for cancer and may increase their probability of developing Parkinson’s Disease. What is “too low” for cholesterol? Believe it or not, a blood level of 150. A healthy level would be 200 or even a little higher. I know that the medical profession recommends cholesterol levels under 200, but you need to understand that the “healthy” level was determined by a panel of nine doctors, eight of which were making money from the drug companies who made statin cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Coincidence? I doubt it. Recent research has shown that those guidelines really had no basis in fact. Fortunately, in 2006 a review in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that there was insufficient evidence to support the target numbers outlined by the panel and that the studies attempting to do so suffered from major flaws.

The drugs of choice for lowering cholesterol are the statins. These act by blocking cholesterol formation in the liver. They are widely used but actually less than one in 100 patients with high cholesterol may need them, and these are the people with genetically very high cholesterol that is over 330. However, even this group of patients may not actually need to have their cholesterol lowered.

According to thoracic surgeon Dwight C. Lundell, M.D.

- Statins have not been proven to help any woman of any age!
- Statins have not been proven to help anyone over the age of 65!
- The only group of patients who may, and I emphasize "may" get any benefit, are middle aged men who have had a previous heart attack.

Using statin drugs to lower cholesterol levels does not address the inflammation that may be at the root of the high cholesterol levels. Ron Rosedale, MD, one of the leading anti-aging doctors in the U.S. Stated, "If excessive damage is occurring such that it is necessary to distribute extra cholesterol through the bloodstream, it would **not** seem very wise to merely lower the cholesterol and forget about why it is there in the first place."

Statin drugs cause a wide range of serious problems that are too numerous to list here. For a complete list, go to the web site of Dr. Duane Graveline, MD at [www.spacedoc.net](http://www.spacedoc.net). Dr. Graveline was a NASA astronaut who had a very bad personal experience with statins. His experience prompted him to research cholesterol and statin drugs. His web site is a "must read" for anyone taking these drugs.

Our nation's fear of dietary fat and cholesterol arose following studies done by Ancel Keys in the 1950's. Keys based his studies on statistics from seven countries and hypothesized from his research that saturated fats from such sources as red meat, eggs, butter, animal fats and dairy were directly linked to coronary disease. People began to replace butter with margarine, avoided eggs and red meat and turned to a low fat diet in general. Unfortunately, a low fat diet is necessarily a higher carb diet which leads to obesity and diabetes.

One of the major problems with assessing cardiac risk is the testing that is used. Most doctors only look at total cholesterol and the LDL and HDL fractions. LDL is considered "bad" cholesterol, however whether it is bad or not depends on the type of LDL that is involved. There is pattern A and pattern B LDL. If you have high pattern A LDL, you're actually at less risk of heart disease. With a higher pattern B, your risk is increased. Just looking at total LDL is really of very limited value.

A more effective test for cardiac risk is the VAP (Vertical Auto Profile) test. The VAP measures 22 different components of cholesterol to give a much better picture of true cardiac risk. This is the test that we use in our office. You can find more information on the VAP by going to [www.artherotech.com](http://www.artherotech.com). If we find you have significant risk factors, we can correct them with natural herbal and nutritional substances rather than the commonly used drugs that have numerous side effects.

There is much more that could (and needs to) be said about this subject, but space prohibits it. Just be aware that being on cholesterol lowering medications might not only be unnecessary, and not in your best interest, but could actually be harmful to your health. Cholesterol is your friend – not your enemy.

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