

Health & Wellness Newsletter



Physical Health Cholesterol Confusion

Clearing up confusion about cholesterol and the dangers of high cholesterol can help you keep your levels within a healthy range, lowering your chances of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. First, it's important to separate **fact from fiction** about cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a bad thing. Your body needs cholesterol to function; it keeps cell membranes stable and aids in the production of certain hormones. "Patients need to understand that cholesterol is required for health," says John Willard, MD. Cholesterol only becomes a problem when too much of it circulates in the blood and builds up inside arteries, leading to a condition known as atherosclerosis. If too much cholesterol builds up, that artery becomes blocked, and a heart attack or stroke can occur.

High cholesterol is caused mostly by diet. The biggest factor in a person's cholesterol levels is heredity, Dr. Willard says. The liver is supposed to remove excess cholesterol from the body, but genetics play a large part in its ability to keep cholesterol at a healthy level. "If your liver works perfectly, you're one of the lucky people who can eat whatever you want and your cholesterol will be perfect," Willard says. "Most of us have varying degrees to which it's not quite as effective as it needs to be." For those people whose livers are just slightly under par, a healthier diet can be the solution, reducing cholesterol levels by 10 to 15 percent.

It's always better to control your cholesterol through diet alone than with medications and diet. While this may be an option for people whose cholesterol levels are only slightly elevated, those with significantly high cholesterol levels or a history of vascular disease (like atherosclerosis) may need something extra, like a statin, to lower their cholesterol. "If they try to control it just through diet, they're not going to reach their target," Willard says. "Plus, these meds have additional healthy effects. They decrease inflammation and the risk of having a heart attack, independent of what their cholesterol levels are."

Everyone should aim for the same cholesterol levels. "There's not one particular number for everyone," Willard says. "It depends entirely on what your risk factor profile is." People with no risk factors — such as being a smoker, having diabetes, or having high blood pressure — should try to get their levels of LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, under 160 mg/dL. High LDL cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease. High levels of HDL, or "good" cholesterol, on the other hand, protect against heart disease and are desirable. However, if you have two or more risk factors for heart disease, your LDL cholesterol should be under 130 mg/dL. Those who already have heart disease, or those who have diabetes, should aim even lower, for LDL levels under 100 mg/dL. With all the information floating around, you need to remember that your doctor is the best source for advice on your cholesterol levels and how to manage them.



Healthy Dessert Recipe

Baby Tiramisu

- 1/2 cup(s) nonfat ricotta cheese (4 ounces)
- 2 tablespoon(s) confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon(s) vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon(s) ground cinnamon
- 12 ladyfingers (about 1 3/4 ounces)
- 4 tablespoon(s) brewed espresso or strong coffee, divided
- 2 tablespoon(s) bittersweet chocolate chips, melted (see Tip)

Directions

1. Combine ricotta, sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon in a medium bowl.

2. Place 6 ladyfingers in a 9-by-5-inch (or similar size) loaf pan. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons espresso (or coffee). Spread the ricotta mixture over the ladyfingers. Place another layer of ladyfingers over the ricotta and drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons espresso (or coffee). Drizzle with melted chocolate. Refrigerate until the chocolate is set, about 30 minutes.

Tips & Techniques

To melt chocolate: Microwave on Medium for 1 minute. Stir, then continue microwaving on Medium in 20-second intervals until melted, stirring after each interval. Or place in the top of a double boiler over hot, but not boiling, water. Stir until melted.



Quote of the Week

I have faith
and I'm not afraid to use it.



Spiritual Health

Thank You Lord

Thank you Lord, for giving me the power to say I love you.

Thank you Lord, for giving me the time to express my love for you.

Because you love me, any problem I could ever have is made smaller.

Because you love me, there is hope in every darkness.

Because you love me, there is promise in every circumstance.

Because you love me, no problem will last forever.

Because you love me, every problem is made small.

Because you love me, I can love you back

Because you love me, I can love others.

Amen



Emotional Health

If you think keeping a diary is only for children, think again: Diary writing can serve some healthy adult purposes, too. Diary writing can ease stress, improve your mood, and give you a chance to think more deeply — all of which can help with your physical and emotional health.

There are a number of reasons why journaling can help relieve stress. It can:

- Provide an outlet to work through painful or stressful issues
- Help you find answers to tough questions
- Help you focus on the positive instead of the negative things in your life
- Provide an opportunity to refute negative thoughts

Diary Writing: Coping With Emotions

“There are some people for whom journaling is incredibly powerful, particularly if you are dealing with something that is painful or stressful and taking up a lot of your energy,” says Mary Coussons-Read, PhD, professor of psychology and health and behavioral science and associate dean at the University of Colorado in Denver. Don’t censor yourself — write down everything you are thinking and feeling. Then shut the book and put it away. This requires discipline, but you will find a measure of freedom for the rest of the day and “you may eventually get to the point that you don’t need it,” says Coussons-Read.

Diary Writing: Making Tough Decisions

If you are facing a hard choice you can use diary writing to help make the decision. Here’s how: divide a page into two columns. On one side write all the possible benefits of one option in a list form. On the other side, write the drawbacks. Write the seemingly minor issues as well as the big ones. Then go back and mark off one item on each side until you get to the bottom. If there are any items remaining, that side “wins.” In the same vein, use your diary as a way to identify a problem and then write down several concrete steps you can take to solve or minimize the problem.

Diary Writing: Seeking the Positive

Studies show that people who keep a diary during tough times, such as when caring for a dying loved one, can improve their mood by focusing on the good in their lives rather than the bad. This can be challenging at first, but take a stab at it by trying to answer these questions:

- What am I grateful for? What have I learned?
- How did I make a difference? How will my experience benefit others?
- What did I do well?
- What happened today that brought me or my loved one pleasure, was funny, made me feel valuable?

So grab a pen or sit at your keyboard and get started. It doesn’t matter whether you use a leather-bound journal or your laptop to keep a diary — the benefits are the same.



Joke of the Week

There was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire become a great writer.

When asked to define “great” he said, “I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream, cry, howl in pain and anger!”

We are happy to report that the young man achieved his lofty goal. He now works for Microsoft, writing error messages