

Reducing Cholesterol

There is a lot of hype around about reducing cholesterol. It is the "in" thing for doctors to keep a check on it, particularly as we are getting older. And they want us to take cholesterol reducing drugs to get those levels down - and sometimes want to put us on them when we don't even have a high cholesterol problem!

We have learnt from experience amongst polio survivors in WA that these drugs can cause further polio deterioration. We have been warning members of this for quite a few years now and there have been international alerts for polio survivors too.

Since the news item in the last newsletter, we now have a heart specialist in Adelaide who would like to work with us on finding out the extent of this problem in polio survivors. **So if you are on these drugs, or have been at some stage, please complete the Questionnaire on the opposite page and get it back to us as soon as possible.**

In actual fact, cholesterol is probably not as big a problem as doctors would have us believe. If the cholesterol levels are rising, it is another warning sign that our bodies use, to tell us that we need to change what we are doing. There are a number of factors that can influence cholesterol levels and we need to know what we can do - because the doctor is going to want that level down anyway.

LDL and triglycerides are the levels doctors are worried about. HDL is considered the good guy and we want to get that up to counter-balance LDL. Elevated cholesterol tells us we have a **deficiency of essential fatty acids**, and possibly other vitamins, minerals and amino acids that help to control the amount the body uses or produces. Dietary intake is not the only cause of high cholesterol. If we don't have enough, the body makes more. Or if we eat too much carbohydrate, particularly the processed grain variety, the liver turns the excess into cholesterol for storage in fat cells ie we put on weight.

Cholesterol is increased by

- * lack of essential fatty acids in diet (EFAs)
- * alcohol
- * tobacco smoking
- * excess dietary carbohydrates and fats
- * trans fatty acids - using margarine & vegetable oils
- * casein (the protein) in milk and milk products
- * increased insulin levels/insulin resistance/diabetes
- * low thyroid levels
- * stress
- * increased weight gain
- * missing meals (5-6 small meals a day is best)

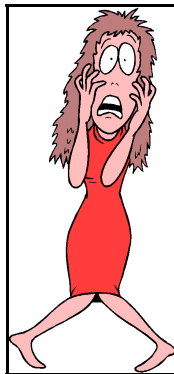
EFAs are found in fish oils, like salmon oil, cod liver oil, halibut; **cold pressed** olive oil, flaxseed oil, evening primrose oil, starflower oil, sunflower oil.

DO NOT use regular vegetable and canola oils.
NORMAL CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Doctors want us to have a cholesterol level below 5.5 mmol/L and often the lower the better. However if it is **below 4 mmol/L we run the risk of strokes, TIA's, lung disease, some cancers, alcoholism, depression and inability to cope with stress.** So we don't want to get cholesterol levels too low either.

DRUGS TO LOWER CHOLESTEROL

STATINS eg Pravochol, Lipitor, Zocor, Vastin, Lipex, or anything where the name in smaller print ends in -statin. Works by stopping the HMG-CoA enzyme making cholesterol in the body. It also stops the making of **Co-enzyme Q10** which is essential for heart function!



Side effects include increased risk of breast cancer, liver dysfunction and muscle destruction. Can also cause headaches, fatigue, numbness, nausea, diarrhoea, constipation, indigestion, abdominal pain and muscle aches and pains. These problems are increased by having grapefruit juice, Niacin (flushing form of B3) or Erythromycin.

CHOLESTYRAMINE, COLESTIPOLS, &

People on cholesterol reducing drugs often are unaware that they have lost muscle or that they end up looking like skin and bone.

STEROLS

Bind to bile so that it can't be reabsorbed, forcing the body to turn more cholesterol into bile. They also stop absorption of fat based vitamins A, E, D, K, B12 and folic acid. They encourage cancer cells too.

GEMFIBROZIL (lopil, lipazil, jezil)

More that are carcinogenic and if taken at the same time as statins they increases muscle problems.

NATURAL WAYS TO REDUCE CHOLESTEROL

1. **Increase EFAs** - eat more oily fish, salmon and cod liver oils, olive oil, flaxseed, evening primrose or starflower oils, depending on your blood group.
2. **Reduce grains** in diet - especially processed grains ie white bread, biscuits, cakes, pizza, pasta (oats and barley may help **NOTE** eggs are now OK)
3. **Eliminate margarines** and other vegetable oils unless cold pressed. (use butter or avocado)
4. **Eat more vegetables** incl avocado, onions, carrots, cabbage, celery, garlic, ginger, nuts and fruit esp grapefruit, apples, oranges, pears, strawberries.
5. **Take amino acids** - carnitine to turn fats into energy and taurine to turn fats into bile.
6. **Take Vitamins C, E, B3, B5, B6 and minerals** magnesium and chromium, and lipoic acid.
7. **Get more exercise and sunlight.**
8. **Get your thyroid function checked** out and get the thyroid treated if needed **see self tests on page 14**