



Cholesterol Facts

Balancing Cholesterol for Good Health

Cholesterol is absolutely essential to health. It is a vital component of hormone production, necessary for healthy cell membranes and the production of bile to digest fats. However, when there is too much of the *wrong kind* of cholesterol in the body, it can be a risk factor for heart disease.

High cholesterol is not really a disease, however. Like any other imbalance of blood chemistry, it is a symptom of a metabolic imbalance. Lowering cholesterol without addressing the underlying causes is just another form of treating symptoms.

Unfortunately, the lab ranges for cholesterol have been artificially reduced due to pressures from the pharmaceutical industry in order to sell more statin products. The normal cholesterol range should be 175 to 275. People with Blood Type O typically run at the higher end of this spectrum, and this is not a symptom of any disease.

Blood cholesterol below 175 or above 275 represents the pathological ranges, meaning that if you are above or below these values then your body is seriously imbalanced. For optimal health, cholesterol should be in the middle third of this range, between 208 and 242. Low cholesterol can be even more serious a health risk than high cholesterol, so it is important to not fall victim to the hype that suggests a person should be using drugs to push his/her cholesterol as low as possible.

To understand how to balance cholesterol in the body, we need to understand a few facts about cholesterol. Cholesterol is a by-product of protein metabolism. The body binds oily fats to the nitrogen in protein to form lipoproteins (lipid=fats, proteins). There are two basic types of lipoproteins—high density lipoproteins and low density lipoproteins.

High density lipoproteins (HDL) are about 50% protein, with the majority of the lipid portion being triglycerides. Triglycerides are neutral fats composed of three fatty acids and glycerol. They are needed by the body for fuel.

Low density lipoproteins (LDL) have a lower triglyceride content and a higher cholesterol content. Having a high quantity of LDL and a low quantity of HDL is a greater risk factor for cardiovascular disease than just having high cholesterol.

So, what causes the body to have too much LDL cholesterol? These lipoproteins help engulf toxins, so the more toxins you have in your body, the higher the cholesterol and LDL lipoproteins. Mercury and chemical solvents (petrochemicals like gasoline) are common toxins that cause cholesterol levels to be elevated. The body tries to break these toxins down gradually, but if it is unable to do so, it will simply create more cholesterol to engulf them. Chlorine also turns HDL to LDL.

Cholesterol plays a very important role in the body. The primary use of cholesterol (60-80%) is to make bile for the digestion of fats. This is why diets, like those in the Mediterranean region, that are high in olive oil, a monounsaturated fat, actually help to lower cholesterol. The cholesterol is used to digest the healthy fats. In contrast, low fat, high carbohydrate diets actually increase cholesterol levels.

Another important role of cholesterol is in producing hormones. Our sex hormones, testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone are all made from cholesterol. Cortisol, DHEA and other adrenal hormones also use cholesterol as their starting material. That's why people's hormones start getting messed up when cholesterol levels get too low (below 175).

The common side effects of the statin drugs used to control cholesterol medically include upset stomach, headache, fatigue, skin rash, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, and peripheral neuropathy (changes in sensation in the arms and legs). Another possible side effect of the statins is liver damage. There are safer ways to reduce cholesterol and here are a few:

Soluble fiber in the diet helps to reduce cholesterol levels. It binds toxins in the gut and absorbs cholesterol being released in the bile so it is carried out the body instead of being reabsorbed. All of the following have been shown to have this effect: *fenugreek*, *chickweed*, *Fat Grabbers*, *Nature's Three*, *LOCLO*, *Psyllium Hulls Combo*, as well as *activated charcoal*. So, taking more fiber is the first and most important thing people should do to help regulate cholesterol.

Cholesterol levels can also be lowered by obtaining adequate quantities of *high quality fats*. Eating a lot of *olive oil* will actually help to lower cholesterol because more bile has to be produced to break down the fats. Essential fatty acids in *Flax Seed Oil* and *Omega-3 EPA* will also help lower cholesterol.

Metabolic imbalances can also cause the liver to overproduce cholesterol. A diet high in simple carbohydrates (sugar, white flour, etc.) will do this. Herbs that can help control cholesterol by aiding liver function include ho shu wu, Cholester-Reg II, niacin, lecithin, garlic and guggul. If these steps aren't sufficient, a competent natural healer can help you look at some other possible causes of high cholesterol, which include: poor digestion, low thyroid, lack of bile production in the liver, and a low functioning pituitary or hypothalamus gland.

By fixing the *cause* of elevated cholesterol, instead of just treating the effect, one can balance cholesterol for optimal health without drugs and without side effects.

Selected References

Biochemical Blood Analysis by Kimberly D. Balas and James P. Cima

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