

Practical Preventable Medicine



CHOLESTEROL BUSTING

It's a fact! Cholesterol causes heart disease...or is it? It seems that although cholesterol gets bad press and all it is indeed an essential part of our bodies providing the basis upon which our bodies make sex hormones such as 'testosterone' and adrenal hormones such as cortisone as a response to stress. It's also the basis for vitamin D synthesis (sunlight helps this process) and is in the cell structure of each cell to retain water and flexibility. Really important stuff, so why the fuss? In fact the liver produces cholesterol in much larger amounts than you can get in your diet for all the above roles so it helps to understand if you are to help reduce your levels if your Doctor has told you they are high.

The problems occur when too much of the low density lipoproteins end up on your arterial walls, reducing blood supply to the heart and thus can cause heart attacks.

Regular readers of this column will remember the comparisons of oils showing the 'good oils' being the Omega 3 fatty acids that lower cholesterol such as fish oil, linseed oil, walnut oil (and therefore walnuts) and extra Virgin olive oil. And that 'trans-fats' that are in margarine, chips and many long storage shelf foods made from vegetable fats are just as bad as animal fats on cholesterol levels. So this month I'll focus on other cholesterol lowering facts.

Garlic has been shown to markedly reduce both cholesterol and benefits blood lipid profile while aiding weight loss, as does hawthorn berry, oats, apple pectin, beans and legumes (including green beans, lentils, and red kidney beans) and all plant fibre helps to flush the liver reducing cholesterol as it's also the basis for bile production. So regular smaller meals helps. Hugely important too is stress levels. You can eat no bad foods and still have high cholesterol as your liver makes it in response to stress (see cortisol). Exercise can help here as it's vital to move blood and flush the liver as well as reducing stress. A half hour bout every day is all you need but it should not be work related, it needs to be recreational to reduce stress levels!! So to sum up, eat good whole foods, relax and get active in a way that makes you feel good and you will have a very happy heart!

Until next time

Stay well

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