



Understanding Cholesterol, the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

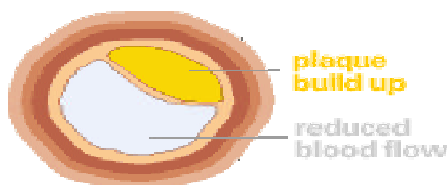
The Good

Cholesterol has recently received negative press but is necessary for many important processes in our bodies. Cholesterol comes from two sources, our bodies and the food we eat. Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance found among the lipids (fats) in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. It is an important part of a healthy body because it is used to form cell membranes, some hormones, as well as being needed for other body functions. When these fats are combined with the proteins they are called lipoproteins. These lipoproteins transport fats to and from the cells.

There are several types of lipoproteins but let's focus on the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL). HDL and LDL are commonly referred to as the good cholesterol and the bad cholesterol respectively. HDL cholesterol is known as "good" cholesterol because a high HDL level seems to protect against heart attack. Medical experts think HDL tends to carry cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it's passed from the body.

The Bad

LDL is the major cholesterol carrier in the blood. When too much LDL cholesterol is in the blood, it can build up in the walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain. Together with other substances in the body, it can form plaque, a thick, hard deposit that can clog those arteries. This condition is known as atherosclerosis. If a clot



forms near this plaque, it can block the blood flow to part of the heart muscle and cause a heart attack. If blood flow is blocked to part of the

brain, a stroke can result. That's why LDL cholesterol is called "bad" cholesterol. Lower levels of LDL cholesterol reflect a lower risk of heart disease.

The Ugly

High cholesterol can be caused by many factors. Cholesterol will naturally increase with age, and is usually higher in men than in women before menopause. Menopause is often associated with increases in LDL cholesterol in women. Genetic causes have also been identified as playing a role in influencing blood cholesterol levels. Other risk factors that further in-

Understanding Cholesterol Continued...

crease the interplay of cholesterol and heart disease include cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and physical inactivity. Excess

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body weight tends to increase blood cholesterol levels so losing weight may help lower levels.

Regular physical activity may not only lower LDL cholesterol, but it may in-

crease levels of desirable HDL. To date, studies have not shown stress to be directly linked to cholesterol levels. But experts say that because people sometimes eat fatty foods to console themselves when under stress, this can cause higher blood cholesterol. If any of these risk factors are present in addition to high blood cholesterol, the risk of heart disease is even greater.

For great tips on lowering cholesterol levels, visit the American Heart Association's website at <http://www.americanheart.org>.

Avoiding the Sting

Most insect stings in the U.S. come from yellow jackets, hornets, wasps, bees and fire ants. Except for fire ants these insects are common throughout the United States. Mosquitoes, ticks, biting flies and some spiders also can cause reactions but these are generally milder.



Most reactions to insect bites are relatively mild, causing itching and stinging, redness, and

mild swelling in the bite area. These reactions should disappear in a day or so. Some people have large localized reactions after a sting. In these cases the swelling and redness extend beyond the bite area. For either of these types of reaction:

1. Move to a safe area to avoid more stings
2. If there is a stinger, remove by scraping or brushing it off with something like a credit card (**Do not** use a tweezer).
3. Wash site with soap and water or swab with a disinfectant.
4. Apply ice or a cold pack to reduce swelling and pain
5. Apply 0.5 percent or 1 percent hydrocortisone cream, calamine lotion or a baking soda paste to the bite or sting several times a day until symptoms subside.
6. Take an antihistamine such as Benadryl or Chlor-Trimeton.

The most serious reaction to an insect sting is an anaphylactic (severe allergic) one. This situation requires immediate attention because the symptoms may progress very rapidly. The symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- Hives, itching, and swelling beyond the sting site.
- Tightness in the chest and difficulty breathing
- Hoarse voice or swelling of the tongue or lips
- Dizziness, faintness, confusion
- Rapid heart rate
- Nausea, cramps, vomiting

If any of these symptoms occur call 911.

While waiting for emergency assistance:

1. Have victim lie down. If victim is alert you may give an antihistamine.
2. If unconscious and breathing, lay victim on side to allow drainage from mouth.
3. If no breathing, movement or response to touch, begin CPR
4. Check to see if victim is carrying an allergy kit containing epinephrine. Follow instructions on the kit and give epinephrine

Tips on Avoiding Insect Stings

- Avoid walking barefoot in the grass (honey bees and bumblebees forage on white clover in

Avoiding the Sting Continued...

- grass)
- Avoid wearing bright colored clothing with flowery patterns. Bees may mistake you for a flower. Light colored clothing attracts fewer bees than dark colored clothing.
- Avoid wearing sweet-smelling perfumes, hair-sprays, colognes, and deodorants.
- Never swat or flail at bees or wasps. Gently brush them aside or wait for them to leave.

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- **Do not** drink from open beverage cans (stinging insects crawl inside, attracted to the sweet liquid).
- When eating outside, try to keep food covered at all times.
- Garbage cans should be covered with tight-fitting lids.
- If you are attacked by several stinging insects, run to get away from them. Go indoors or jump into water.

Health Services' Announcements

Heart Healthy Screenings

Don't forget, Health Services is hosting Healthy Heart Screenings for Oakton Community College employees on Monday, September 29, 2003 from 7:30 a.m.-10 a.m on the DP campus. The following blood screening tests will be offered:

Option A: \$15.00

Fasting glucose and cholesterol level

Option B: \$25.00

Fasting lipid panel (albumin, BUN, creatinine, electrolytes, total bilirubin, calcium, alkaline phosphatase, total protein, SGOT, glucose, and CBC).

All participants should fast 12 hours prior to testing. Screenings must be paid for at the time of service by cash or check. Appointments are necessary and can be made by calling Health Services on the Des Plaines campus at x1885.

Recipes Wanted

Do you have a heart healthy recipe you would like to share? Please submit it with your name and extension to Laura (x1885) or Kay (x1419).

Future Issues

Have ideas for future Health Wise Newsletters? Please let us know by calling Health Services at the Des Plaines campus (847)635-1885 or the Ray Hartstein campus (847)635-1419.

Flu Shots

Coming this October, student and employee flu shots for just \$10. Watch for upcoming announcements.

Coming Attractions

Coming this Spring. Healthy Heart Screenings for both the Ray Harstein and DesPlaines campuses. Watch for upcoming announcements