

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Cholesterol and You

What is cholesterol? Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver and other cells and found in certain foods, such as food from animals, like dairy products, eggs, and meat.

The body needs some cholesterol in order to function properly. Its cell walls, or membranes, need cholesterol in order to produce hormones, vitamin D, and the bile acids that help to digest fat. But the body needs only a limited amount of cholesterol to meet its needs. When too much is present health problems such as heart disease may develop.

Cholesterol and Heart Disease

When too much cholesterol is present, plaque (a thick, hard deposit)



may form in the body's arteries narrowing the space for blood to flow to the heart. Over time, this buildup causes atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) which can lead to heart disease.

When not enough oxygen-carrying blood reaches the heart chest pain -- called angina -- can result. If the blood supply to a portion of the heart is completely cut off by total blockage of a coronary artery, the result is a heart attack. This is usually due to a sudden closure from a blood clot forming on top of a previous narrowing.

Types of Cholesterol

Low density lipoproteins (LDL): LDL, also called "bad" cholesterol,

can cause buildup of plaque on the walls of arteries. The more LDL there is in the blood, the greater the risk of heart disease.

High density lipoproteins (HDL): HDL, also called "good" cholesterol, helps the body get rid of bad cholesterol in the blood. The higher the level of HDL cholesterol, the better. If your levels of HDL are low, your risk of heart disease increases.

Very low density lipoproteins (VLDL): VLDL is similar to LDL cholesterol in that it contains mostly fat and not much protein.

Triglyceride's: Triglyceride's are another type of fat that is carried in the blood by very low density lipo-

(Over)

Cholesterol and You (Continued)

proteins. Excess calories, alcohol, or sugar in the body are converted into triglycerides and stored in fat cells throughout the body.

What Factors Affect Cholesterol Levels?

A variety of factors can affect your cholesterol levels. They include:

Diet. Saturated fat and cholesterol in the food you eat increase cholesterol levels.

Weight. In addition to being a risk factor for heart disease, being overweight can also increase your cholesterol.

Exercise. Regular exercise can lower LDL cholesterol and raise HDL cholesterol.

Age and Gender. As we get older, cholesterol levels rise. Before menopause, women tend to have lower total cholesterol levels than men of the same age. After menopause, however, women's LDL levels tend to rise.

Diabetes. Poorly controlled diabetes increases cholesterol levels.

Heredity. Your genes partly determine how much cholesterol your body makes. High blood cholesterol can run in families.

Other causes. Certain medications and medical conditions can cause high cholesterol.

How Can You Lower Your Cholesterol and Risk of Heart Disease?

A few simple changes can help lower your cholesterol and risk for heart disease:

Eat low-cholesterol foods. The American Heart Association recommends that you limit your average

Benefits Corner

Mail Order Brand Name to Generic Equivalent Program

As a member of the County Health Pool, effective August 1, you will have the advantage to save money through a new mail order program that promotes the use of the generic equivalent of the brand name drug that you may currently be utilizing or may be utilizing in the future.

When a member mails a prescription for a targeted multi-source brand-name medication to Home Delivery, the order is automatically "flagged" for a call to the doctor. Two attempts are then made to contact the doctor, via fax or phone, requesting approval to fill the prescription with a chemically-equivalent generic.

If a patient denies the generic prescription dispensed, Express Scripts will obtain a new Dispense As Written (DAW) prescription from the doctor and reconvert the prescription to the brand-name drug as originally requested by the doctor. Express Scripts will credit the patient the copayment for the generic originally dispensed.

This is an excellent program that is available to assist in maintaining your health while lowering your cost.

daily cholesterol intake to less than 300 milligrams. If you have heart disease, limit your daily intake to less than 200 milligrams. People can significantly lower their dietary cholesterol intake by keeping their dietary intake of saturated fats low and by avoiding foods that are high in saturated fat and that contain substantial amounts of dietary cholesterol.

Quit smoking. Smoking lowers HDL ("good") cholesterol levels. This trend can be reversed if you quit smoking.

Exercise. Exercise increases HDL cholesterol in some people. Even moderate-intensity activities, if done daily, can help control weight, diabetes, and high blood pressure -- all risk factors for heart disease.

Take medication as prescribed by your doctor. Sometimes making changes to your diet and increasing exercise is not enough to bring your cholesterol down. You may also need to take a cholesterol-lowering drug.

Source: www.webmd.com

