



health

NEWS

2008

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September

PROMOTIONS ARE GOOD FROM 9/01/08 TO 9/30/08

WATCH YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body needs to function normally. It's used in the cell membranes that surround cells throughout your body. You also use cholesterol to make important chemicals, including hormones, vitamin D and the acids that help you digest fat.

"Cholesterol has a variety of uses in the body that are very important," says Dr. James Cleeman, coordinator of NIH's National Cholesterol Education Program, "but the body makes all it needs and we don't need to get any more from our food." When the level of cholesterol in the blood gets too high, it can start to cause trouble. The landmark Framingham Heart Study, funded by NIH, first showed that the higher the cholesterol level in your blood, the greater your risk for heart disease—the number 1 killer of Americans, both women and men.

Some factors affecting your cholesterol level are out of your control. As you get older, your cholesterol level naturally rises. Before menopause, women have lower total cholesterol levels than men of the same age, but after menopause women's LDL levels tend to rise. Your genes also affect how fast you make cholesterol and remove it from the blood.

However, there are 3 things you can control: changing what you eat, doing more physical activity and controlling your weight.

Diet. Saturated fat raises your LDL cholesterol level more than anything else in your diet. It's found mostly in meats and full-fat dairy products. Trans fat raises cholesterol similarly, but makes up far less of the American diet. Cholesterol in foods can also raise blood cholesterol levels. Saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol are all listed on food labels so that you can choose foods with lower amounts to help lower your LDL cholesterol level. Foods with soluble fiber—such as whole grain cereals, fruits and beans—help lower your cholesterol, too. And some products contain the LDL-lowering compounds "stanols" and "sterols."

Excess **weight** can increase your LDL cholesterol level. "Fat tissue is not inert," Cleeman says. "It's chemically active and produces all kinds of changes." One is raising LDL blood cholesterol levels. Losing weight can help lower your LDL and total cholesterol levels.

Regular physical activity can help you control your weight, lower your LDL and raise your HDL levels. You should try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day.

Furthermore, medication can help. "Medication should be added to lifestyle changes," Cleeman advises, "not substituted for them." Lifestyle changes can bring benefits medications can't.



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Prostate Cancer Prevention: Risk Factors

The prostate is a gland in males that is involved in the production of semen. It is located between the bladder and the rectum. The normal prostate gland is the size of a walnut and surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder.

Prostate cancer is the most common nonskin cancer among men in the US. Although the number of men with this disease is large, the number of men who are expected to die of the disease is considerably smaller, since the majority of men diagnosed with prostate cancer do not die of it.

Prostate cancer can sometimes be associated with known risk factors for the disease. Many risk factors are modifiable though not all can be avoided.

Age: The risk increases as a man gets older.

Chemoprevention: Chemoprevention is the use of specific natural or man-made drugs, vitamins, or other agents to reverse, suppress, or prevent cancer growth. Several agents, including difluoromethylornithine (DFMO), isoflavonoids, selenium, vitamins D and E, and lycopene have shown potential benefit in studies.

Diet and Lifestyle: The effect of diet on prostate cancer risk is under study. A diet high in fat, espe-

cially animal fat, may be associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer. More studies are needed to determine if a low-fat diet with more fruits and vegetables helps prevent prostate cancer.

Hormonal Prevention: Studies are underway to discover the role of certain drugs, such as finasteride, that reduce the amount of male hormone as preventive agents for prostate cancer.

Race: The risk is dramatically higher among blacks, intermediate among whites, and lowest among native Japanese. However, this increase in risk may be due to other factors associated with race. Studies have shown a link between levels of testosterone and prostate cancer risk, with black men having the highest levels.

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