

CHOLESTEROL ARE YOU SCARED OF IT?

Cholesterol is essential in the body, it makes hormones, insulates neurons, is part of the structure of every cell in the body. It also produces bile to digest fats, helps metabolise important fat soluble vitamins such as Vitamin D, and makes hormones such as testosterone, oestrogen and adrenal hormones.



Often seen as separate health issues, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood glucose levels are all closely related and combined are referred to as Metabolic Syndrome.

These factors, especially combined, greatly increase your risk of obesity and cardiovascular disease. These include, but are not limited to - diabetes, heart attack, congestive heart failure, stroke and kidney disease. These diseases are all driven by inflammation.

Your weight, waist size, diet, blood sugar levels, stress levels, and levels of inflammation all play a big factor in whether or not you have damaging cholesterol. There are two main types of cholesterol that can cause problems, oxidised cholesterol and certain types of Low-density Lipoprotein (LDLs).

Diets high in carbohydrates (confectionary, refined foods and grains) such as - sweets, crackers, bread and pasta - can all lead to inflammation in the body and oxidised cholesterol.

The carbohydrates (whether complex or simple) ultimately break down into sugar which acts like sandpaper in the blood vessels. This causes damage to the artery walls and eventually some of this sugar converts into long-chain saturated fats - the kind that cause oxidative damage to the body.

Hydrogenated oils, trans fats and vegetable oils also cause inflammation and oxidative stress to the body and increases blood pressure. This kind of diet (standard Australian diet or SAD diet) leads to Metabolic Syndrome which explains why so many people are medicated for blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol by the time they are in their 40s and 50s.

To manage your cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes risks, it is important to eat a diet with adequate protein, fat and lots of colourful vegetables for good health.

Don't avoid fat and don't avoid eggs! Just eat real foods including quality free-range meats such

grass-fed beef, free range eggs and chicken, and wild fish from the ocean like salmon and mackerel. Add avocado, garlic, onion and celery. When cooking with oil use coconut oil or unsalted block butter - unless dairy intolerant. (I don't recommend extra virgin cold pressed olive oil for cooking, but it is great as a salad dressing). Add colourful vegies, like greens, carrots, fresh beetroot, spinach and zucchini. You can also snack on small servings of raw nuts and seeds like almonds, pecans and pepitas.

Fresh beetroot juice is also very effective at reducing blood pressure as it contains antioxidants. Antioxidants are essential to stop the oxidative damage that causes oxidised cholesterol. Colourful vegetables and fruit such as broccoli, carrots, blueberries and oranges are highest in antioxidants.

Reduce caffeine, alcohol and packaged foods containing added salt and anything containing added sugar, especially fructose (except for an actual piece of fresh fruit). Also avoid all energy drinks.

Stress management is also essential as stress can result in high blood pressure and inflammation. As your stress hormones are made from cholesterol, stress drives your body to make more cholesterol!

Don't forget exercise is also essential and helps manage stress, blood pressure and blood sugar levels!

It is also important to note that an essential nutrient for cardiovascular health is coenzyme Q10 which is made by the body. Statin medications (for cholesterol) interfere with the body's ability to make CoQ10!

About the Writer

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