

## The Good And The Bad And The Basics Of Cholesterol

Cholesterol is the name for a class of chemicals found in every cell in the human body. Serving structural and regulatory functions at the cellular level, these chemicals are absolutely essential to survival. However, in recent years, high cholesterol levels have been linked to heart diseases and other illnesses, so there is a push within the health care community to make sure that people monitor their cholesterol and receive professional assistance to reduce the cholesterol in their bodies if necessary. Poor diet and sedentary life styles are typically the culprits behind the disorder, and it can often be treated with diet and exercise. However, for those who do not respond to diet and exercise, there are also medications that have successfully lowered cholesterol levels in many patients.

Lowering cholesterol levels is one of the most important public health initiatives in current years. In many ways, having high cholesterol levels can be a silent killer since it typically presents no symptoms until serious damage has already occurred. Hardening of the arteries is one of the most common disorders associated with the condition. What many people do not realize, however, is that not all cholesterol is bad. The "bad" form of cholesterol that forms fatty deposits in the blood vessels is known as low density lipoprotein (LDL). The other type that has beneficial effects and does not contribute to fatty build up is the high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. So, cholesterol reduction is really a misnomer--the idea is to increase the ration of HDL to LDL.

High cholesterol levels have been linked to a number of factors, with both genetics and lifestyle choices playing a key role. Diet is one of the most important factors, with diets rich in fatty substances being particularly detrimental. Exercise has shown to be an effective way to treat many different cardiovascular disorders, and high cholesterol disease in no exception. Of course, as in almost any condition, genetics plays a key role. Those who have a family history of the disorder are much more likely to develop similar problems. Gender is also a fact--men tend to have higher levels than women, though the levels in both men and women elevate as they age. Menopause is a key factor in women, as high cholesterol occurrence increases sharply as women pass the stage of menopause.

When lifestyle changes alone are not enough to bring levels back to within normal parameters, a number of cholesterol lowering drug treatments are available. Drugs such as Lipitor, Mevacor, Zocor and others have had a major impact in the way that the disease is managed and treated. There have been a number of major clinical studies that have confirmed the effectiveness of these and similar drugs, with many showing heart disease reductions of over forty percent in patients with high cholesterol.

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### About the Author

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