

The Wellness Family

Dr. Erin Keeps You Informed

Cholesterol & Kids

What was once considered a problem only suffered by adults has become a new concern for children. With the noticeable increase in childhood obesity the medical profession is claiming that there has been a dangerous rise in cardiovascular disease, especially among those children who have obese parents diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease.

What is Cholesterol?

A lipid, or fat, in the blood stream, cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and used by the body to make hormones and cell membranes. This means that cholesterol is naturally in the body regardless of what you eat, as your body produces about 1,000 milligrams of cholesterol each day.

All other cholesterol in our system comes from the foods we eat, such as egg yolks, meat, poultry, seafood and dairy products (i.e. milk, cheese and ice cream).

Good Cholesterol vs Bad Cholesterol

There are two kinds of lipoproteins – low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or “bad cholesterol” and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or “good cholesterol”. LDL are the primary cholesterol carriers, but if there's too much in the blood stream they begin to clump and build up on the walls of the arteries that lead to the heart and the brain.

HDL carry cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it's processed and sent out of the body. While high levels of bad cholesterol increase the risk for serious health complications the good cholesterol counteracts that risk by helping protect the circulatory system.

According to the National Cholesterol Education Program (NECP) the following are the typical guidelines for children and adolescents:

- LDL less than 110 mg/dL
- Total cholesterol level of less than 170 mg/dL
- LDL over 130 mg/dL or greater is high and a major concern

These children are typically placed on dietary and exercise regimens, but if this does not make a change within 3 to 6 months then the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children as young as 8 be placed on statins or cholesterol lowering medications.

The Problem With the Science

Back in 2004 the NECP set a new norm in the acceptable levels of LDL for those they considered at “high risk”. The new guidelines that were accepted and endorsed by the American Heart Association advise that LDL cholesterol should be below 70 mg/dL for those in specific categories.

This is a 30 percent downward revision from the guidelines that were already lowered in 2001 (to 100 mg/dL) and is expected to add a “few million” to the more than 40 million users of cholesterol-lowering drugs world-wide.



“...Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver...”

The studies have obviously shown a direct link between lower levels of LDL and a lower risk of heart attacks but consumer groups have pointed out that the new guidelines are tainted by the influence of U.S. pharmaceutical companies, which share in a \$26 billion market for these chemicals.

These same consumer groups have pointed out that eight of the nine cholesterol experts received consulting or speaking fees, at one time or another, from manufacturers of anti-cholesterol drugs. While attempting to inform the public of this fact would have been acceptable, few have done so.

A Chemical Problem

Critics of statins say that the drugs are a “risky fix” to a bigger problem. Side-effects typically include:

- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Muscle pain, weakness and inflammation
- Fatigue
- Nerve damage
- A possible break down of muscle tissue which can be fatal

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Darshak Sanghavi, chief of pediatric cardiology at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, has observed that the FDA approved some statins for use in treating children without ever having studied their long-term effects in children.

Additionally, other pharmaceuticals have proven to increase cholesterol. A team of researchers from the University of California San Francisco found that Accutane, an acne medication typically given to teens, raised the cholesterol in almost half of those tested who had previously normal levels.

Diet First

Cholesterol lowering chemicals make it possible for these children and their families to avoid the necessary lifestyle changes required to live healthier. Simply decreasing fat consumption can have a positive effect on cholesterol levels, but increasing the intake of several other food items has proven to have a beneficial effect as well:

- Garlic - 2400 scientific studies have shown garlic to be beneficial for the cardiovascular system
- Soluble fiber – reduces LDL cholesterol by reducing its absorption in the intestines
 - Found in oats, barley, rye, peas, beans as well as some fruits and vegetables, actually binds with the cholesterol so that it is excreted instead of absorbed.
- Vitamin B3 (Niacin) - studies have shown that this vitamin lowers bad cholesterol and increases good cholesterol

The Underlying Issue

Andrew Weil, M.D., the author of “Why our Healthcare Matters” has noted a serious issue in modern medicine’s approach of treating symptoms. In a nut

shell, way too much money is spent on disease maintenance and not enough on cure and prevention. In 2006, Americans alone spent \$280 billion on medications, almost the same amount spent by the rest of the world combined.

Dr. Weil believes that one of the biggest contributors to the current health care crisis is a lack of wellness. Much of the population of the world eats too much (and it’s typically the wrong food), exercises too little and suffers the effects of too much stress and not enough sleep.

In 2008, prescription sales in the United States alone exceeded \$291 billion with Lipitor, a statin, leading the way. The only way to address the current healthcare crisis is to introduce a new understanding of wellness, and promote health instead of trying to treat disease.

Top 5 Steps to Lowering Cholesterol

5. Decrease fat intake in your diet by eating less red meat, egg yolks, and dairy products.
4. Eat more garlic, soluble fiber and dark green vegetables.
3. Exercise just 20 minutes a day in any physical activity will make a difference.
2. Spend at least 20 minutes a day at a relaxing quiet activity you enjoy.
1. Talk to your Family Wellness Chiropractor about healthier choices for you and your family.

Dear Patient,

Dr. Erin is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family’s wellness lifestyle choices.

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