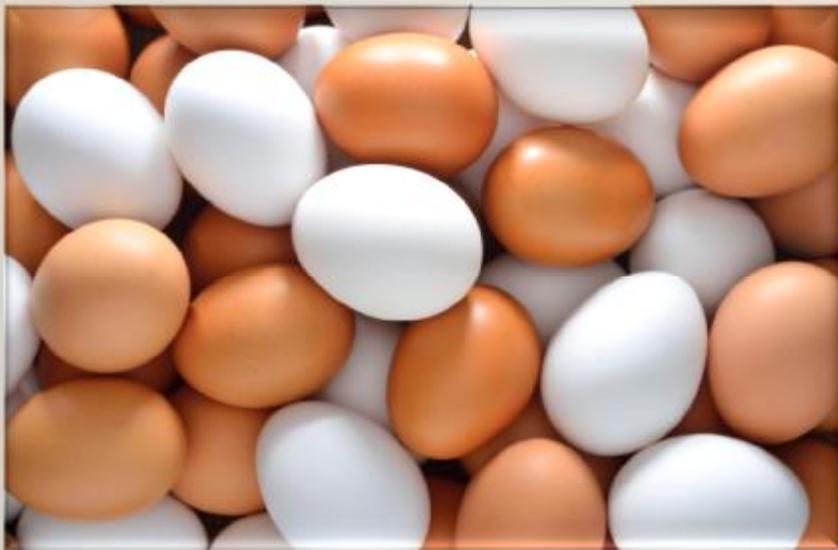


You Make my Heart Beat like a Drum

The Truth about Cholesterol



There are two kinds of lipoproteins which carry cholesterol through your body. Having healthy levels of both types is extremely important. The first kind is low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and the second kind is high-density lipoproteins (HDL). LDL cholesterol is sometimes called "bad" cholesterol because a high level of it leads to a buildup of cholesterol in your arteries. HDL cholesterol on the other hand, is called the "good" cholesterol because it carries cholesterol from other parts of your body back to the liver where it is then removed from the body entirely.

The major problem with cholesterol is that, though it *is* needed for your body to function properly, it doesn't actually need to be consumed. Your liver already produces enough on its own. In fact, there is no dietary minimum for cholesterol. Unless you have problems with your liver, it's best to steer clear of it altogether since high levels of cholesterol are heavily linked to problems with the heart and other parts of the cardiovascular system.

Surprisingly enough, total cholesterol levels have dropped significantly in the past 50 years. For example, in the early 1960's, 33% of people ages 20 to 74 had high cholesterol, where as nowadays that number has dropped to just 16%. This is mostly due to the fact that high cholesterol was not recognized as a serious health problem until more recently.

The myth about eggs being unhealthy is widespread in the health world. But that's all it is--- a myth. Eggs are actually known to raise levels of good cholesterol, and are a good source of protein. This also goes for other foods like: walnuts, certain types of margarine and whipped butters, or cheese. Keep in mind though, that you should still limit yourself when eating these.

Having high levels of bad cholesterol can be a hereditary trait. In fact, genetic factors are the *most* common cause for high levels of LDL cholesterol. There's also a rare disease known as familial hypercholesterolemia, which can cause total cholesterol levels from between 300 mg/dL to 600 mg/dL. This disease affects approximately 1 in 500 people in the world.

If your levels of cholesterol are high enough, you can actually see it. It shows up as tiny yellowish bumps called xanthomas. They vary in size, and can show up all over the body. The most common spots you'll see them though, are the joints, hands, and face. They can even show up on your eyelids, though that's not always linked to high cholesterol.

Cholesterol-free food can still raise your cholesterol, especially if they are high in trans fats or saturated fats. These will mostly be found in commercially available baked goods, or in fried foods. Read ingredient lists carefully, checking for fat content as well as cholesterol content.

Tips on How to Lower your Cholesterol

Give your Heart a Break



- Exercising daily can come with plenty of benefits, including a lowered level of cholesterol, and a healthier heart.

- Eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids. Examples include: chia seeds, fish, broccoli, edamame, walnuts, or enriched eggs.

- Choose leaner cuts of meat like chicken or pork-loin, instead of heavy red

meats like steak or ham.

- Remove trans-fats from your diet. You can tell if something has trans-fats in it by reading the ingredient list. It'll be labeled as "partially hydrogenated oils"

- Choose whole-grain options when available; they're far healthier than their 'white' alternatives.

- If you smoke, here's another reason to consider quitting. Smoking raises your cholesterol. In fact, just 20 minutes after you stop smoking, your blood pressure decreases.

- Losing weight can have significant benefits in terms of your cholesterol levels. Be more aware of what you are putting into your body.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables, which are high in dietary fiber and help to lower your cholesterol. Also, they're generally delicious, so win-win.