

SINAI HEALTH LINK

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HEALTH LINK

1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624)

HIGH CHOLESTEROL: IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY

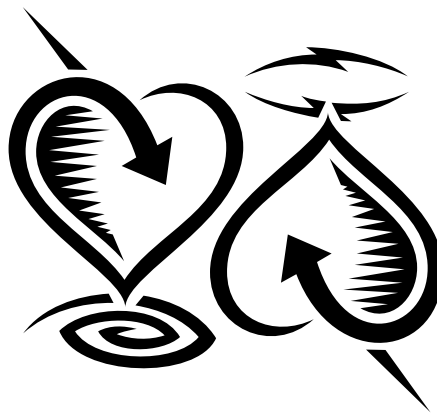
Cholesterol. Most people have heard of it. But they may not understand how it can hurt – or help – them. Here are the facts:

Everyone has cholesterol – even healthy people. It's a soft, fatty substance carried in the blood that provides energy and nutrition to the body. There's more than one kind of cholesterol. And, when it comes to your health, some are bad and some are good.

Bad cholesterol causes heart attacks, strokes and blockages in leg and kidney arteries that can lead to leg pain, ulcers or kidney failure. Good cholesterol protects you against heart attacks.

Several things affect how much cholesterol you have and whether it is dangerously high, says heart specialist Sandeep Khosla, MD, chief of cardiology at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago. One is your family background and genes. There's nothing you can do to change that. But what you eat directly affects your cholesterol level. And smoking and diabetes increase it.

There usually are no signs or symptoms of high cholesterol. Sometimes, tiny bumps – cholesterol deposits – show up on eyelids, knuckles, knees or heels. And if you develop blockages in your heart, neck or leg arteries, you may feel chest pain, shortness of breath or leg pain when you walk or exercise.



All it takes to check your cholesterol level is a simple blood test. Your doctor can arrange it. It's never too early to check. But by the time you're 35 (for men) or 45 (for women), you should have it done – even sooner if heart disease runs in your family.

What if it is too high?

First, follow a low-cholesterol diet, Dr. Khosla says. Your doctor will tell you which foods are fine and which to avoid. Exercise increases good cholesterol and reduces stress, which lowers bad cholesterol. Stop smoking and your good cholesterol also should get a boost.

If you have diabetes, keeping it under control lowers your cholesterol.

Finally, there are relatively safe medicines that can help. Your doctor will prescribe them, if they're needed.

"With diet, exercise and medication," Dr. Khosla says, "your doctor may help you cut your cholesterol level in half."

Keeping cholesterol under control is important even if you feel fine.

"There is clear evidence that lowering cholesterol reduces the chances of having a heart attack or stroke by 30 percent," Dr. Khosla says, "even in patients with no known heart disease."

IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL IS HIGH OR IF YOU JUST WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS, SEE YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR OR CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI TO SEE A SINAI DOCTOR.

Ask Your Sinai Doctor

Q. *If I follow a low-cholesterol diet, does that mean I can never have a high-cholesterol meal again?*

A. Absolutely not. If you're "good," there's no reason you can't let yourself go now and then. It's hard to diet all the time, especially around holidays. The question is: How often can you eat a high-cholesterol meal? The answer: About once every other month.

HEALTHY LIVING TIP

It's easy to schedule a counseling session with a registered dietitian at Mount Sinai. First get a referral from one of our physicians. Then call (773) 542-2000, Ext. 3261 or 3262.

Tips for a low-cholesterol diet:



- **Eat more fruits, vegetables and grain products like bread and cereals. Two exceptions are avocados, which are loaded with fat, and coconuts, which are naturally high in cholesterol.**
- **Cut down on or even cut out red meat. That means you should eat more turkey, chicken and fish – but without the skin, because it's loaded with fat.**
- **Eat fewer eggs – no more than three a week. Cholesterol-free egg products taste fine and there is no difference when they're used in cooking.**
- **Avoid fried foods and cream gravy. If you must fry, use non-stick spray, or at least cut down on cooking oil. Deep-frying is definitely out. Grilling or baking can be just as tasty.**
- **Reduce or avoid whole milk, cream, ice cream (unless it's low-fat), cheese and butter. You'll be surprised how fast you get used to skim milk – and many reduced-fat cheeses taste very good.**
- **When cutting down on fat, add more flavor by using sauces. Tabasco, barbecue, steak and taco sauce are often low in fat – and delicious. Go for it!**

Fat-Free Cheesecake



- 1 Tbsp. graham cracker crumbs**
- 1 1/2 cups non-fat cottage cheese**
- 1 egg substitute**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1/2 cup (4 oz.) non-fat cream cheese**
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- 1/4 tsp. grated lemon peel**

Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs on bottom and sides of 9-inch baking pan and put aside. In blender or food processor, mix cottage cheese and half of egg substitute until smooth. In bigger bowl, combine the mixture, the rest of the egg substitute and the remaining ingredients. Beat at low speed for a couple of minutes and pour into pan. Bake at 325° for 50 minutes. Cool in pan on wire rack. Chill for two hours.

Walk, ride or run cholesterol away

Diet and medicine aren't the only ways to cut cholesterol. Exercise can make a big difference.

Just pick a favorite activity that gets your heart beating faster for 20 minutes or more – bicycle riding, swimming, tennis, even walking quickly and steadily – and do it at least three or four times a week. Unless you're swimming, you'll probably break a sweat and will breathe harder, but you should be able to comfortably talk with someone.

Keep it up and you won't just lower your cholesterol. You could lose weight, gain energy and feel great.

For information on Sinai health and community services, call 1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624); TTY (773) 257-6289.
