Soluble Fiber

Support for Healthy Cholesterol

Eating Habits

*See Beneficial Fiber fact sheet

Foods naturally rich in soluble fiber have proven particularly good at lowering cholesterol.

~ Fiber is found in plant food and is not broken down in the intestines through the digestive process and therefore not absorbed in the body

~ Bacteria in the intestines can ferment soluble fiber, changing it to short-chain fatty acid which are used as the main source of energy for the cells lining the colon and may reduce the amount of cholesterol produced by the liver

~ One of the ways soluble fiber may lower cholesterol is through its ability to get in the way of bile uptake in the intestines so the bile is excreted. To make up for this loss of bile, the liver makes more bile by pulling cholesterol out of the bloodstream. Therefore, the more bile made from the liver, the more LDL cholesterol is pulled from the blood.

~ Fiber also binds to cholesterol in your digestive system and moves it out of the body before it can be absorbed.

~ Research has shown that increasing soluble fiber by 5 to 10 g a day reduces LDL cholesterol by about five percent.
**Beneficial Fats**

*See Beneficial Fat fact sheet

- The relationship between fat and cholesterol has to do with the quality of fat not necessarily the quantity of fat. Eating more quality fat—nuts, avocados, seeds, fish and oils is very helpful in balancing your blood sugar and insulin and reducing the amount of both LDL and triglycerides the liver makes and improving HDL.

- Certain dietary saturated fats such as greasy or fried foods may raise the level of both total cholesterol and LDL.

- Foods may be high in fat such as peanut butter and avocado but do not have a deleterious effect on cholesterol levels.

- Foods can be low in fat but high in dietary cholesterol and not affect blood levels of LDL.

**Blood Sugar and Insulin Balance**

*See resources for addressing Blood Sugar and Insulin Balance

- Blood sugar and insulin imbalances are due to too much simple carbohydrates and lack of adequate protein and beneficial fat. When you eat sugar, especially high fructose corn syrup, it causes the liver to produce more cholesterol, particularly triglycerides.

- Studies show that measuring triglycerides levels may be a better way to predict the risk of heart disease. More importantly, the ratio of triglycerides to HDL cholesterol has been shown to be an even better measure.

- When blood sugar and insulin are out of balance the body makes more cholesterol and absorbs less causing more cholesterol to be in the blood.

**Plant Sterols**

*See Plant Sterols fact sheet

- Plant sterols are natural substances that are in the same family as cholesterol but are produced by plants instead of animals. They work by mimicking cholesterol and competing with it for absorption.

- When sterols are present in your digestive tract, they block the absorption of cholesterol and rather than getting into the bloodstream the cholesterol leaves your body as waste. This causes your LDL cholesterol and your total cholesterol to go down, while your HDL stays the same.

- The National Cholesterol Education Program recommends that 2 grams of plant sterols each day for people who have high cholesterol.

**Stress “Fight or Flight”**

*See links to mindfulness exercises and other stress reducing practices

- Cholesterol is used to make the stress hormone cortisol. So when the sympathetic nervous system is activated, creating a fight or flight response in the body, cholesterol rises to meet the growing need to make cortisol.

- Stress can cause poor eating habits and poor food choices.

- As cortisol is released, it raises the body’s blood-glucose level, which in turn creates more triglyceride production. Higher triglycerides create higher total cholesterol levels.

- Fluid is lost from the blood under stress. This concentrates the blood, including cholesterol levels.

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