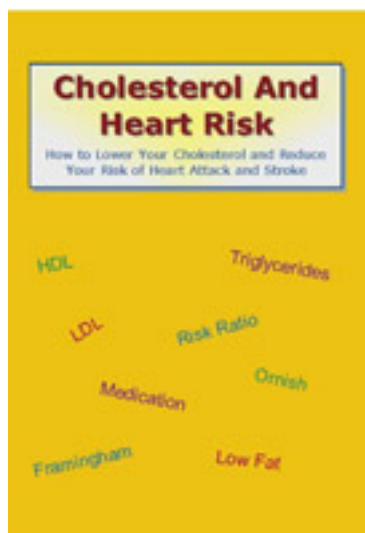


(Style on a Dime) I really don't need another expense of buying pills

Written by Marcia Humphrey
Thursday, 19 March 2009 14:31



"My doctor told me that if my Cholesterol remains high, she is going to have to put me on medication. Do you have any easy tips for helping me to bring this problem under control? With my money stretched tight already, I really don't need another expense of buying pills, or the hassle of taking them!"

Sincerely, Wannabe Pill-Free

Dear Wannabe,

First, let me congratulate you on taking steps toward managing your cholesterol health in a pill-free manner. Since lowering your cholesterol also lowers your risk of heart disease or stroke, you are wise to address it now. You see, cholesterol is a type of fat found in the blood. In fact, my own Total Cholesterol (TC) is somewhat on the high side, at about 227 (Levels below 200 milligrams per deciliter [mg/dL] are usually considered normal.), and it seems to run in my family. What I have only recently come to understand about cholesterol numbers, is that in order to better determine your level of risk, you must know the big picture. Isn't it interesting that knowing the "big picture" is key to successfully managing anything?!

You may be wondering, "What are the warning signs of high cholesterol?" There are no real noticeable signs of high cholesterol for most people, although it can be detected through a routine blood test. That is one reason why regular annual exams are vitally important. The sooner a potential problem is detected, the quicker it can be addressed (And more options will be available to you.)

Everyone Should Check Cholesterol Levels Annually

The ratio of total cholesterol (TC) to good cholesterol, high density lipoprotein (HDL), is called the cardiac risk ratio (CRR). Try to keep the CRR below 5 and ideally under 3.5. Learn more details by visiting an informative site www.heartriskonline.com

Good Cholesterol (HDL) vs. Bad Cholesterol (LDL)

The whole cholesterol equation can get pretty confusing, but here is one important fact to remember: If your total cholesterol (TC) level is above 240 mg/dL or if your low density lipoprotein level (LDL) is above 100 mg/dL, you should be in a cholesterol-reducing regimen supervised by a health care provider.

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Free and Low-Cost (and Pill-free) Cholesterol Reducing Options

Eat More of This: Cheerios and Oatmeal (Daily)-Studies show that three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole grain oat foods can help lower cholesterol. Garlic tablets also helped me. When I first discovered that I had high cholesterol over 15 years ago, per my doctor's suggestions, I started taking garlic tablets and consuming a daily bowl of oatmeal for breakfast. After a few months my TC had dropped by about 15 points. Please note: Garlic can act as a natural blood thinner, so it could interact with other medications you may be taking. Always check with your physician before introducing new medications or supplements.

Eat Less of This: Significantly limit fatty meats and animal products, shrimp, egg yolks, butter, and ice cream. If you are like me and love eggs, choose egg whites (use the whites of two eggs to replace one whole egg in recipes).

Do More of This: Exercise! Yes, healthy living requires that we make this a regular part of our lives. Set a goal of walking daily for thirty minutes. Haven't worked out in years? That's okay, just start small. Go for fifteen minutes around the block or nearby school yard, and then build up to thirty minutes, three times per week, then five times weekly. Actually any exercise that you enjoy will be beneficial to heart health.

While you still have the option, choose to modify your lifestyle in healthy, cholesterol-lowering ways that reduce your risk of stroke and heart disease. Rather than spending money on medication copayments, save that money, set yourself free and Enjoy the rewards of good health!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.

Editor's Note: The information presented in this column is general in nature and is intended for educational purposes only. It is not meant to replace, or be used in addition to, the advice of health care professionals. If you have specific health care needs, or for complete information about your health care, please contact a doctor or other health care provider.