



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Newspaper

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RE: Cholesterol

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"Lowering Blood Cholesterol Levels"

High cholesterol levels are a leading risk factor of heart disease. In a telephone survey conducted by the State of Michigan in 2009, 46.4% of adults surveyed said that they were told at some point in their lives that they had high cholesterol. Some cholesterol is made naturally by our body and needed for the creation of hormones and bile. Cholesterol is also found in the animal and dairy foods that we eat. When your cholesterol sneaks up above a desirable level, it puts you at increased risk for heart attack, stroke, or other cardiovascular diseases.

There are two types of cholesterol which are used to check and calculate your total cholesterol. First, is high-density lipoprotein (HDL), known as "good" cholesterol. A high level of HDL has been shown to protect you against heart attacks. Experts believe that HDL carries cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver where they are broken down and excreted. The ideal level for HDL cholesterol is 40 mg/dl or above. Second, is low-density lipoprotein (LDL), which is considered "bad" cholesterol. If you have too much, your arteries will become clogged, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke. Try to keep your LDL cholesterol levels low, less than 100 mg/dl.

There is a clear relationship between dietary fat and blood cholesterol levels. Eating foods that are high in saturated fat will increase your cholesterol. You can easily identify saturated fats

because they are solid at room temperature. High levels of saturated fat are found in animal products such as butter, lard, and fatty meats. Vegetable oils such as palm and coconut oil contain saturated fat as well. Monounsaturated fats, found in olive and canola oil, are the best because they lower your “bad” cholesterol and keep your “good” cholesterol the same. Be sure to eat a low fat diet because the more dietary fats you consume the higher your cholesterol levels will be.

Making good diet choices is your first line of defense when striving to improve your cholesterol levels. The American Heart Association recommends you limit cholesterol from food to an average of no more than 300 mg per day. The average American consumes 400-600 mg of cholesterol per day which is way too much. Knowing which foods to avoid and which to include will not only improve your cholesterol levels, but will improve your overall health as well. Here are some suggestions on the proper foods you can eat to help lower your cholesterol: 1) Eat a combination diet which is rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods. 2) Make sure you eat lean cuts of meat without skin. 3) Consume no more than 1 teaspoon of fats and oils per day and 4) Limit yourself to no more than two eggs per week.

Along with changing your diet, there are other steps you can take to help lower your cholesterol level. Here is a checklist of what you can do to help keep your cholesterol under control.

- **Maintain a healthy weight** – If you weigh too much, your body stores more fat and cholesterol. This may cause your blood cholesterol level to rise.
- **Exercise regularly** – A regular exercise program can help raise your HDL “good” cholesterol level, help you lose weight, and lower other heart risks.
- **Get regular medical checkups** – Visit your doctor to be sure your cholesterol levels are under control. Continue rechecking if you’re desirable and at risk for heart disease.
- **Eat a low-fat high fiber diet** – Limit your fats to less than one-third of your total calories. Eat soluble fiber which lowers your cholesterol levels. Fiber keeps the cholesterol you eat from being absorbed by your body.
- **Reduce other heart risks** – Stop smoking, control high blood pressure and reduce the stress in your life.
- **Know your family history** – Some people will have higher cholesterol because of genetics. It’s important to visit your family doctor regularly and get your cholesterol checked.

Remember, the optimal cholesterol level you're shooting for is below 200 mg/dl. The higher your cholesterol the greater your risks for having a heart attack. If you would like any additional information regarding cholesterol, please contact your local health department or the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the residents in Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.

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