

REAL Health Breakthroughs

from William Campbell Douglass II, M.D.

The Great Cholesterol Myth Busted!

The controversy has been raging for years about the importance (or lack of importance) of cholesterol in the diet. Radicals like me have been saying all along that the more cholesterol you eat the better. Back in the 70s when the cardiologists were telling their patients to limit eggs to one a week, I was telling my patients to eat 10 a day if they liked.

Over the last 50 years, the “high cholesterol/heart disease” theory has been disproved many times over, but mainstream medicine still pretends not to know it. In fact, in 2004 the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* printed a study by Dr. David R. Pendergast of the State University of New York that proves my point perfectly.

Dr. Pendergast and his colleagues placed 11 healthy adults on a very low-fat diet with only 19 percent of calories from fat—something only a dedicated carrot cruncher could tolerate. The volunteers’ good cholesterol, HDL, dropped significantly. Then Pendergast had them switch to a high-fat plan. After three weeks on this diet, which provided 50 percent of calories from fat, participants’ HDL levels went up considerably. And, by the way, the high-fat diet did not raise LDL (bad) cholesterol beyond the levels participants had on their regular diets.

“While saturated fat is blamed for raising ‘bad’ LDL cholesterol levels, Pendergast said, it may in fact be the combination of lots of fat and too many calories that makes for unhealthy cholesterol profiles.”

Saturated fat does NOT raise cholesterol levels. That was proven 80 years ago by the famous arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who lived on whale and seal blubber for a year and came out of it wiser but no fatter. In fact, he was in great shape.

One of the greatest nutritionists of the century, George Mann, M.D., the co-director of the Framingham Heart Study, said, “The diet-heart idea [the notion that saturated fats and cholesterol cause heart disease] is the greatest scientific deception of our times. This idea has been repeatedly shown to be wrong, and yet, for complicated reasons of pride, profit and prejudice, the hypothesis continues to be exploited by scientists, fund-raising enterprises, food companies and even governmental agencies. The public is being deceived by the greatest health scam of the century.”

The REAL scoop on heart disease

So if the problem isn’t saturated fat and cholesterol, what is it? It’s an amino acid called homocysteine. Normally, homocysteine is used to build and maintain tissues. Your body forms homocysteine when you eat food containing an amino acid called methionine, which is present in all animal and vegetable protein. But too much in your bloodstream literally shreds your arteries from the inside out, allowing fat and cholesterol to stick...eventually leading to total blockage, followed by a heart attack or stroke.

Thirty years of intensive research has revealed that excess homocysteine disables a mechanism in your arterial cells called contact inhibition, which regulates the growth of the smooth muscle cells just below the inner wall of the artery.

As a result, the smooth muscle cells multiply out of control. This creates a bulge that pushes other

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cells apart and protrudes into the artery. This is what makes arteriosclerosis possible: The inner wall becomes uneven and rough, then the build up of plaque begins...and the rest, as they say, is scientific.

Studies published in many prominent medical journals have linked elevated homocysteine levels with cardiac problems. An article in the June 1996 issue of *Medical Tribune News* stated the following: “High levels of homocysteine, a substance involved in protein production, are associated with artery thickening, a precursor to both stroke and heart disease.”

A team of cardiologists in Norway conducted a study in which they followed 587 heart patients for five years. The results, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, showed that 24 percent of the patients with high levels of homocysteine in their blood were dead within five years. The five-year mortality rate among the patients with normal homocysteine levels was only 3 percent.

A 1992 Harvard study of 15,000 physicians showed that those physicians with the highest 5 percent of homocysteine readings had a threefold-plus increase in heart-attack risk (*JAMA*, vol. 268, pp. 877-81).

Homocysteine also interferes with your blood vessels' natural ability to relax and makes your blood stickier. The good news is that there's a simple secret to controlling homocysteine overload: Your body requires a steady supply of three particular “helper nutrients” to process, convert, and excrete excess homocysteine.

The three Bs for better vascular health

Vitamins B₆ and B₁₂ and folic acid (which is also a B vitamin) are the keys to maintaining normal homocysteine levels. These three nutrients play a crucial role in converting the potential villain homocysteine into cystathione and methionine, which are harmless and occur naturally.

Folic acid is the most important of these B vitamins in attacking and neutralizing homocysteine. There are now numerous studies reported in peer-reviewed international medical and research journals that demonstrate the benefits of folic acid in combating high homocysteine levels.

The best sources of folic acid are animal protein, animal fat, and dairy products. The leader in folate nutrition—by far—is liver. A small serving of beef liver—3 oz., for instance—contains 174 micrograms of folic acid. When is the last time a nutritionist or doctor advised you to eat some variety of liver a least once a week? Probably never. Chicken liver is the tastiest and, with the proper sauce, is an outstanding dish. BUT, don't overcook it. It should be a little red or at least pink.

But even with a healthy diet containing plenty of folate-rich animal food, you should still take a supplement just to be absolutely certain you're getting enough of this nutrient. Take at least 800 micrograms a day. Keep in mind that doses up to 5,000 micrograms—and more—are safe and will do you even more good. I take 5,000 to 15,000 micrograms a day.

You should consider supplementing with vitamins B₆ and B₁₂ as well. These two nutrients are often destroyed by heating, dehydration, and other types of food processing, and our soil is depleted of much of its nutrient value, so it's virtually impossible to get enough B₆ and B₁₂ to normalize homocysteine levels from food sources alone. I suggest at least 25 milligrams of B₆, and 500 micrograms of B₁₂ daily.

For more about cholesterol and hundreds of other real health topics, go to Dr. Douglass' website at www.DouglassReport.com.

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