



www.aseasonofhappiness.com

Staying Alive - Lowering Cholesterol

The build-up of cholesterol in the body can be fatal

Heart disease is one of the major illnesses that can be a killer; and it is caused mainly by the arteries becoming clogged, thus restricting the blood flow to and from the heart. As I have recently discovered, blocked arteries also affect other parts of the body such as the legs. In my case, both femoral and tibial arteries (upper and lower leg) are 75% restricted necessitating an operation. Not only does this condition make walking painful because the muscles are deprived of oxygen transported by the blood, the flow of which has become severely limited; but, so I have been told, should the problem not be rectified I face the possibility of having my leg amputated – not a happy prospect.

The cause, apparently, is a white fatty substance produced by the liver; and which travels through the bloodstream and clings to the walls of arteries creating a blockage. This is Cholesterol, the result of eating the wrong foods. The worst culprits seem to be saturated fat and trans-fatty acids, high levels of which are present in butter, cream and fatty meats such as bacon, sausages and many processed products. Sometimes working in tandem with Cholesterol are Triglycerides, blood sugars caused by consuming excess calories, especially sugar itself and soft drinks and alcohol which contain large amounts of sugar. With respect to the old saying 'eat, drink and be merry', the more the merrier is definitely not a wise choice. Sorry, but there it is.

Being overweight does not help, particularly with respect to Triglycerides, and can lead to Diabetes. This eventuality, however, can be prevented by reducing body weight to whatever is an ideal level for the individual. Needless to say, this also applies to cutting down the intake of Cholesterol. Above-average and high levels of both have to come down in order to stay healthy. Following are a number of suggestions for adjusting the diet to make this happen.

Try to avoid whole-milk products like butter, cream, cheese, ice-cream, yoghurt and condensed milk. Off the menu should be liver, paté, liverwurst and kidney; so too some seafood such as prawns, squid, fish roe and fish canned in oil. Even salmon has been found to be a problem, unlike tuna canned in water. Limit consumption of bacon, ham, sausages, salami and pressed or canned meats such as corned beef; and stick to low-fat meat mince. Even premium beef mince contains some saturated fat; but this can be reduced by browning first, then draining off the excess fat before continuing with the cooking. Pies, pasties, cakes in general and sweet biscuits are not a good idea, especially the cream-filled sort; and candies of any description are really a no-no. As for snacks like potato chips and other savoury treats, they will simply add to the problem.

Fast food, of course, is usually high in fat, and it is probably the wrong sort; so try to wean yourself off it. Any fried food is a risk, certainly deep-fried; fried in a little extra virgin olive oil, though, is not too bad.

Well, you may be thinking, what about the good news? There is plenty, provided you are prepared to effect a few changes to your lifestyle. Low-fat milk and skim milk are okay, along with cottage and ricotta cheeses and non-fat yoghurt. Fresh fish is a healthy option, preferably poached or grilled; and it is apparently advisable to have this twice a week. Most meats are alright too, as long as they are trimmed of all fat; plus lean chicken or turkey, minus the skin. Some carbs are beneficial: bread, crumpets and water biscuits provide energy and are usually low in fat; but watch out loading on the spread. Use polyunsaturated spread or margarine, jam and honey; but in moderation. As a bit of a bonus, rice (not fried), pasta and cereals that are not toasted are said to be fine; but once again, too much and the weight will pile on. Feeling hungry? Fruits and vegetables can fix that, especially those high in fibre; and they aren't fattening.

There are other recommendations for reducing the build-up of Cholesterol and lowering Triglyceride levels; and the best person to advise on these is your doctor. Before initiating changes that you believe may do the trick, visit your GP first. Some simple blood tests can determine whether in fact you need to do something immediately or over time; and having your progress monitored regularly by a medical practitioner is the safest way to go. In the meantime, make a plan to get off the saturated fats, the cream cakes and junk food; cut down the alcohol intake; drink plenty of water; and do get regular exercise, including a daily walk at a reasonable pace. And if you smoke, you already know what you need to do.

So, reduce your intake of saturated fats and sugar. Always check the labels of food items to see which are the healthier options. Once you begin the new diet you will probably experience some withdrawal symptoms after a few days, but don't let that deter you. Should you fall off the wagon on occasions, accept it and climb back on; and definitely don't binge-eat!

In closing, might I remind you that you only have one life and one body. Please do the right thing and take good care of them.

A Season of Happiness - helping you and yours towards a better lifestyle

For a look at some more informative articles on a variety of subjects just return to the web page



Where every effort has been made to be accurate and fair-minded, comments and opinions expressed on this website are based on personal experience and do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community or those groups and institutions mentioned. A Season of Happiness and its staff accept no responsibility for any outcome based on suggestions offered. What works for us may not work for you. Please bear this in mind.