

ABOUT CHOLESTEROL:

A study of various literature By Martin R. Carbone -- 11/3/06

- What is it?
- What does it do?
- Is it harmful?
- See the list of 112 articles starting on page three.
- My personal conclusions follow. These conclusions are based on my reading of the listed articles and some related information.

The numbers shown in () refer to the number of the 112 listed articles that have representative information on this point. The numbers are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the information in the articles.

Q: What is cholesterol?

A: A self-regulated fatty substance (19) (also called a waxy alcohol (7) or waxy substance (34), or fatty alcohol (45)), primarily made by the liver (14) and the brain. It basically comes in two forms, LDL and HDL. LDL is a low density version that basically repairs cells throughout the body (14). HDL is a high density version that removes excess cholesterol from the body by carrying it to the liver (19) (34) (46) (60).

Q: What does it do?

A: It builds all the cell membranes in our bodies (14) (47), makes hormones, regulates itself (16) and keeps us alive. It “constitutes 50 per cent of the fragile membranes that sheath all cells” (48)

Q: Is it as harmful as we are being led to believe?

A: I personally doubt it. I found nothing in my studies that worries me in the least.

REASONING

1. Much theory and evidence supports the idea that HDL scavenges excess cholesterol (9) (16) (19) (21). A number of studies suggest that HDL protects us from arterial problems, including heart attacks (44) (45) (56) (63). This evidence did not surface in strong public announcements until 1992 (45). By that time almost all doctors and the public had concluded that all cholesterol was bad. That conclusion still is, quite incorrectly and unfortunately, prevalent.
2. No studies have linked HDL to any problems.
3. The ratio of total cholesterol to HDL seems to be an important factor. Lower ratios are good. The average ratio for all people in the U.S. is 4.5. People with heart problems have ratios of 5.5. Since my ratio, at 5.2 is above the average, **it appears that I am at some risk.** (92). Also see (32) for other suggested ratios. However the preponderance of other data does is at odds with these suggested ratios, so I am discounting them.
4. Michael DeBakey, the famous surgeon, has significant doubts about the general conclusion that cholesterol cause heart problems (22) .
5. Duane Graveline a medical doctor and former astronaut has written extensively about the dangers of statin drugs and the reduction of cholesterol. See << <http://www.spacedoc.net/> >>
6. U. Ravnskov, a medical doctor and researcher has written extensively about the dangers of reducing cho-

lesterol. He thinks it is a valuable material that has nothing to do with heart problems. See << <http://www.ravnskov.nu/cholesterol.htm> >>

7. "Cholesterol is essential for brain development and neuronal functions. However, at present little is known about cholesterol homeostasis in the central nervous system which is separated by the rest of the body by the blood-brain barrier." See << <http://www.helsinki.fi/biocentrum/ikonen.html> >> This suggests it may be dangerous to take statins, which may interfere with cholesterol in the brain.
8. I see no evidence that reducing LDL reduces death or heart problems. Reducing LDL is widely assumed to reduce death and heart problems -- but the assumptions are just that, assumptions, they are not based on any reasonable evidence. **All the studies (and there are many) that conclude that LDL cholesterol or total cholesterol is a problem did not take levels of HDL into consideration! Until that is done, there appears to be no justification for the conclusions. It may be that in all of those tests, it was the absence of HDL that caused the problem. (20)**
9. The process and mechanics of cholesterol production (3), (10), (14 -- this study resulted in a Nobel prize) (35) (57) and arterial problems (12), (13) (97) seem to be very well known, but nothing in that process indicates that HDL is incapable of controlling the levels of LDL.
10. There is no other naturally reported mechanism for controlling LDL. HDL does all the work.
11. No study that I am aware of has ever shown that there is a problem with LDL if HDL levels are in balance with LDL. It is the balance that matters (32).
12. Dr. Richard Kronmal, a statistician at the University of Washington, found that the relationship between cholesterol levels and risk of death from heart attacks diminished as people grew older, eventually becoming non-existent (56).
13. Some cholesterol-lowering drugs (statins) have serious side effects -- including more than 100 deaths by Baycol (84) (91). Also Crestor has been implicated in one death (102)
14. Other reported side-effects are memory loss, erectile dysfunction, depression (58), cancer (4), constipation (60), heart rhythm abnormalities (60) and muscle degradation (102).
15. Low LDL has been linked to diminished mental acuity (68) (104) and many other serious problems including cancer, lung disease, suicide, violent death (69) and intracranial hemorrhage (47)
16. Only 40 percent of people with high cholesterol levels die of heart disease (57).
17. In 3,904 men and women from 70 to 90 years old, those with low levels of HDL were 2-1/2 times as likely to die of heart disease as those with high levels (60).
18. HDL is considered low at 35 mg. / tenth of a liter; a high level is 60 mg. / tenth of a liter (60) (62).
19. HDL is good for you (94) (96) (107).
20. "Nearly 1/2 of heart patients have normal cholesterol levels" (101)
21. Based on the above, it is foolish to try to reduce LDL by taking drugs.

MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHOLESTEROL PROCESS

1. The body manufactures cholesterol -- mostly in the liver, but also in the brain.
2. Some cholesterol is picked up and combined with certain proteins and is called LDL (Low Density Lipoproteins).
3. LDL goes to artery walls (3) and deposits the cholesterol where it is used to build cell membranes.
4. Other cholesterol is picked up by other proteins and is called HDL (High Density Lipoproteins).
5. Cholesterol is the basic building block of all cell membranes including artery cells, brain cells and muscle cells. It is extremely important. We are basically made of cholesterol. It is necessary for life.
6. The cholesterol system is self controlled. The HDL removes excess cholesterol by taking it to the liver where it is discharged as waste.

Selected N.Y. Times Articles On Cholesterol -- From 1981 to November 2, 2006.

These 112 articles were selected from hundreds archived by the NY Times. They were read in an effort to understand the subject by Martin Carbone who was recently advised by his doctor to take the anti-cholesterol statin-drug, Crestor.

It is hoped that these articles will (a) help you understand what cholesterol is, (b) how it can affect you and (c) whether or not you should try to control it.

TO RETRIEVE ARTICLES:

- 1 Go to << <http://www.nytimes.com/> >>
- 2 Select "NY Times Archive Since 1981"
- 2 Put the title of article in search box -- see list below
- 3 The article should come up

TITLES OF ARTICLES

1. LONG-TERM STUDY LINKS CHOLESTEROL TO HAZARD OF EARLY CORONARY DEATH
2. IDEAS AND TRENDS IN SUMMARY; Is Cholesterol dangerous? New Study Says Yes
3. RESEARCHER TRACES A PROCESS OF CHOLESTEROL BUILDUP
4. LIFE-SAVING BENEFITS OF LOW-CHOLESTEROL DIET AFFIRMED IN RIGOROUS STUDY
5. COFFEE'S DRINKERS SAID TO RUN RISKS
6. STUDY BACKS CUTTING CHOLESTEROL TO CURB HEART DISEASE RISK
7. PERSONAL HEALTH; LOWERING CHOLESTEROL IN BLOOD
8. PERSONAL HEALTH; CALCIUM, CHOLESTEROL AND DIET
9. DIET TO PREVENT HEART ATTACKS AIMS TO CUT BLOOD FAT LEVELS
10. 2 WIN HORWITZ PRIZE FOR CHOLESTEROL WORK
11. PANEL SAYS CHOLESTEROL LEVELS IN MANY IS DANGEROUSLY HIGH
12. LOWERING BLOOD CHOLESTEROL TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE
13. SCIENCE WATCH; 'HEALING' MAY WORSEN CHOLESTEROL DAMAGE
14. 2 AMERICANS WIN NOBEL MEDICINE PRIZE
15. NEW STUDY TIES COFFEE DRINKING OF 5 CUPS DAILY TO HEART DISEASE
16. METHOD OF TREATING CAUSE OF HEART ATTACKS TESTED
17. Q & A: DR. W. VIRGIL BROWN; SOME OUNCES OF PREVENTION THAT LOWER HEART RISK
18. SCIENCE WATCH; Seasonal Cholesterol
19. HIGH CHOLESTEROL THREATENING MANY
20. PERSONAL HEALTH - DECEMBER 10, 1986 / BY JANE BRODY
21. CHOLESTEROL: DRUG HAILED AS TREATMENT BREAKTHROUGH
22. SURGEON QUESTIONS CHOLESTEROL ROLE
23. FOR FIRST TIME, CUT IN CHOLESTEROL IS SHOWN TO DETER ARTERY CLOGGING
24. IDEAS & TRENDS; Some Unclogging Of The Arteries
25. Cholesterol Researcher is Censured For Misrepresenting Data in Article
26. SCIENCE WATCH; PECTIN and CHOLESTEROL
27. IDEAS AND TRENDS: New Drug; Toward Cholesterol Control
28. U.S. DEFINES CHOLESTEROL HAZARDS AND OFFERS TREATMENT GUIDELINES
29. Cholesterol-Altering Drugs Found To Reduce Risk of Heart Attack
30. Doctors' Attitudes on Cholesterol Are Studied

31. New Study Indicates One in 3 Tend To Get Risky Form of Cholesterol
32. FITNESS; Cholesterol Control Is Only One Step to Health
33. HEALTH: Study Suggests One Saturated Fat May Deserve Clean Bill of Health
34. HOW TO LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL
35. New Theory Explains How Cholesterol Threatens the Heart
36. Researchers Say a Hormone in the Blood Drastically Cuts Cholesterol
37. Health; Doctors Confirm Benefits Of Aspirin
38. Major Study Aims to Learn Who Should Lower Cholesterol
39. EATING WELL; Cholesterol Matters, But How Much?
40. Decaffeinated Coffee Tied to Cholesterol Rise
41. HEALTH; Heart Groups Reaffirm The Health Benefits of Lower Cholesterol
42. High Cholesterol Poses Heart Risk in Older Men, Study Says
43. Oil From Rice Aids Monkey
44. Blood Fat Is Said to Imperil Heart Despite Normal Cholesterol Level
45. Panel Urges Test for Cholesterol That Helps Prevent Heart Disease
46. Cholesterol Testing Urged For Elderly
47. Cholesterol's New Image: High Is Bad; So Is Low
48. Support Grows For Vitamins As Roadblocks To Heart Disease
49. Anti-Cholesterol Vitamins?; Your Mother Is Still Right About Vegetables and Fruit
50. Study Concludes That Eating Nuts Can Cut the Risk of Heart Attack
51. Study Finds 2 Drinks A Day Keeps Heart Fit
52. Vitamin E Greatly Reduces Risk of Heart Disease, Studies Suggest
53. Survey Finds Major Gains In Cutting Blood Cholesterol
54. Substance Is Linked to Strokes
55. Study Suggests That 2 Fatty Acids May help Keep Hearts Healthy
56. Heart Ills and High Cholesterol May Not Be Linked In Old Age
57. Study Finds Cholesterol-Lowering Drug May Save Lives
58. Use of Drugs to Lower Cholesterol is Tied to a Higher Depression Risk
59. Company News; Zocor Found to Lower Deaths From Heart Disease
60. Sign Of Heart Risk for the Elderly
61. Study Finds Cholesterol Screening is Flawed
62. Personal Health
63. A Facilitator for Good Cholesterol is Found
64. F.D.A. allows Drug as a Heart Medicine
65. Warner-Lambert's Cholesterol Therapy Wins Approval
66. Protein May be Heart Risk Factor
67. Heart Drugs Fight Stroke
68. Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs May Dull Alertness
69. Researcher Links Reduction in Cholesterol With Violent Death
70. A Broader Benefit is Found in a Drug To Cut Cholesterol
71. National News Briefs; Cholesterol Drugs Found to Help Heart Patients
72. Researchers Hail Carotid Testing
73. Personal Health; Paradox Or Not; Cholesterol in France Is On The Rise
74. Personal Health; The Fatty Nut Finds Its Place At The Table
75. Protein Predicts Heart Attacks Better Than Cholesterol
76. Early Testing Urged For High Cholesterol
77. More Fans For Drugs That Fight Cholesterol
78. Vital Signs; Longevity; Centenarians' Secret: It's in the Blood
79. Heart Study Affirms Value of Statin Drugs

80. Vital Signs: Prevention; In Youth, It's Not Just About Cholesterol
81. U.S. Panel Backs Broader Steps To Reduce Risk of Heart Attacks
82. Personal Health; Plotting an Attack On Your Cholesterol
83. Cholesterol Fighters Lower Heart Attack Risk, Study Finds
84. Company News; Bayer Raises Death Toll From Cholesterol Drug
85. Vital Signs: Habits; Lower Cholesterol, the Grazing Way
86. Vital Signs: Treatment; A Cholesterol Drug's Added Benefits
87. Pfizer to Pay \$49 Million in Fraud Case
88. Company News; Pfizer Says Drug Reduces Heart Attacks and Strokes
89. Study Says a Protein May Be Better Than Cholesterol in Predicting Heart Disease Risk
90. Vital Signs: Side Effects; When Aspirin Can't Help a Heart
91. Bayer Says It Is Trying to Settle Another 500 Lawsuits Over Its Drug for Cholesterol
92. Nation's Largest Medical Prize Goes to 2 for Cholesterol Work
93. Vital Signs: Warnings; Increasing the Odds of Trouble
94. Personal Health; Cholesterol: When It's Good, It's Very, Very good.
95. Living Longer and Larger: It's in the Size of Cholesterol-Caring Molecules
96. Cholesterol Study offers Hope for a Bold Therapy
97. Study of Two Cholesterol Drugs Finds One Halts Heart Disease
98. New Conclusions on Cholesterol
99. F.D.A. Calls Ads For Cholesterol Pill Crestor "False and Misleading"
100. Two studies Suggest a Protein Has a Big Role in Heart Disease
101. A Quandary in Good News
102. Cholesterol Drug Linked to a Death
103. Mixed Reviews for 2 of Pfizer's Top Drugs
104. Abilities: The Smart Side of Cholesterol
105. Low Cholesterol? Don't Brag Quite Yet
106. Mixed Safety Results on Cholesterol Drug
107. Know Your Numbers and Improve Your Odds
108. Vital Signs: Testing; With Decaf, Lose the Jitters, but Gain the Gunk?
109. Be Merry, Not Ancient
110. Value of Cholesterol Targets is Disputed
111. One for the Ages: A Prescription That May Extend Life
112. Yes, Red Wine Holds Answer, Check Dosage