



Welcome

I hope you have been well since the last newsletter and 2010 is turning out as you hoped.

Cholesterol is the primary topic of this issue. I constantly field questions about cholesterol -- "What's good and bad cholesterol mean?", "How do I improve it?", "What's normal?" etc.

The questions are with good reason, because heart disease and stroke are still accounting for approximately one quarter of deaths in Australia and NZ. Also, over half the people I meet have cholesterol higher than ideal -- depending on what you consider as "ideal". It is the concept of "ideal" that is one of the main messages of this quarter's newsletter.

When I worked in a biochemistry laboratory in the early eighties (yes I was very very young at the time!) the reported cholesterol range was up to 6.7 (mmol/l) -- that meant that about 10% of the people we were meeting would have been considered to have high cholesterol. The pathology reporting ranges moved to 5.5 -- thus 40% were then considered high. With 4.0 now deemed as ideal -- over 80% of the people I meet are considered high (or at least not ideal). That does raise some interesting questions regarding "ideal" and its implications.

If you have had your cholesterol tested in the past, please take a few moments to consider this information. If you are over 35 and not had your cholesterol measured, it's a good idea to go and get it checked.

If you would like a detailed document regarding healthy eating to manage cholesterol (and in general) reply to this email with the subject "Extra Info". There is no cost.

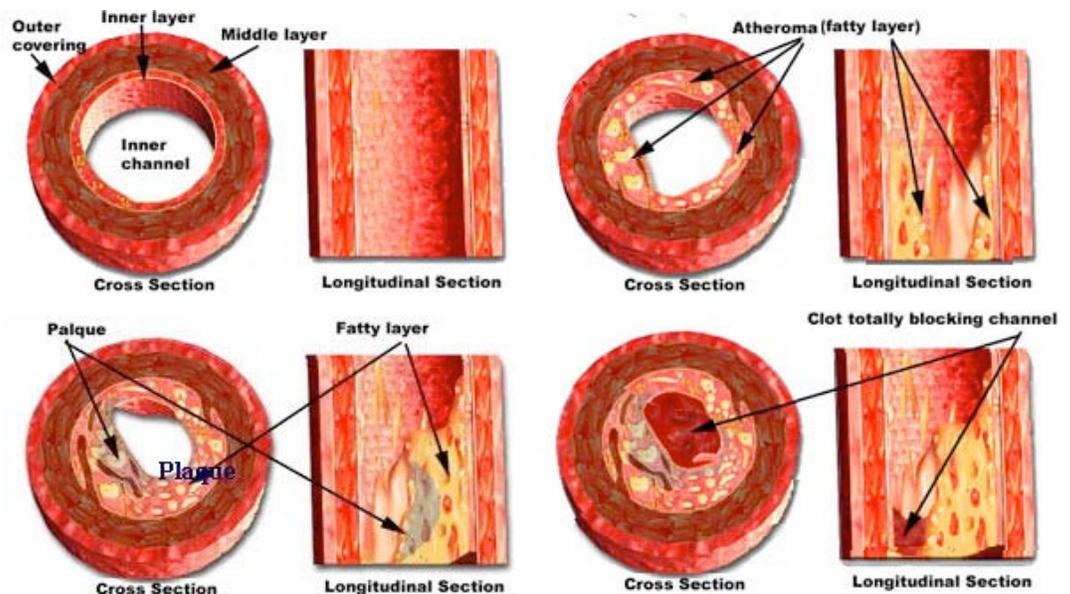
If your organisation is planning a conference or staff training may I ask you to pass on this download to the organiser: [the THP program](#). It's great fun with lasting benefits.

Wishing you the best of health.

Rob Edwards

Why is cholesterol such a big deal

A picture paints a thousand words. The progression of arterial disease is driven by high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, inactivity, being overweight and high cholesterol. Age and family history also play a role, but you can't do much about that. The last picture means big trouble -- you do have considerable control over avoiding or slowing this progress.



"The best advice we ever had was given to us as toddlers; take one step at a time."

P K Shaw

Don't Forget

If you have chest pain or left arm pain call for help. Have the assistance come to you rather than trying to drive yourself.

If you don't know CPR consider learning it (St. Johns Ambulance can help). You might save someone's life.

If you are over 35 and don't know your cholesterol -- get it checked.

"One must have the adventurous daring to accept oneself as a bundle of possibilities and undertake the most interesting game in the world -- making the most of one's best."

HARRY EMERSON
FOSDICK
(1878--1969)
Clergyman

Don't Forget:

To lower cholesterol:

Limit intake of saturated fats (fatty meats etc.)

Limit processed foods high in fat (biscuits, chips etc.)

Eat plenty of high fibre foods

Maintain ideal weight

Increase physical activity

Worth a look on the web

www.heartfoundation.com.au our National Heart Foundation you are probably familiar with.

www.heartfoundation.org.nz The web site offers answers to frequently asked questions on heart health, heart health resources and cookbooks, plus latest information and media news.

www.americanheart.org An extensive site from the American Heart Association with much useful information on risk factors, medical procedures, blood tests, diet etc.

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd US National Heart Lung and Blood Institute provides an easy to follow overview on heart disease. Check out the quizzes and self assessment tools.

www.foodwatch.com.au Catherine Saxelby's site is full of useful nutritional information and I recommend you subscribe to her monthly newsletter.

Shredded Chicken Sesame Salad

Serves 4

3 cups cooked chicken shredded (300g) (leftovers or skinned BBQ chicken is fine)
1 cup Chinese cabbage shredded (50g)
1 cup bean shoots
1 carrot, finely grated
1 bunch coriander, leaves only
4-6 green shallots (green part only)
Toasted sesame seeds to garnish

Dressing:

1/4 cup reduced-salt soy sauce
3 teaspoons sesame oil
2 teaspoons lime juice (about 1 lime)
1 small red chilli, chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon brown sugar

Prepare chicken by finely slicing the chicken flesh into long shreds. Place in a large mixing bowl. Add shredded cabbage, bean shoots, carrot, coriander leaves and shallots.

To make dressing: Place all ingredients into a screw top jar and shake to mix well.

Just before serving, pour over dressing and mix well to combine. Serve on lettuce leaf cups or with crisp toast slices of grainy bread. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds.

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Chinese Peasants and Pharmaceutical Giants

I read an article suggesting the average Cholesterol of Chinese peasant farmers is less than 3.0. No real surprise considering their low energy, low fat diet and highly active lifestyles. The inference: we all should aspire to this level because that is what we were designed to be. Alternatively I've had the argument put to me that lower cholesterol (and blood pressure) targets are driven by drug companies -- because a lower target creates massive new markets for profitable drugs. The inference: we are at the mercy of a corporate conspiracy.

Well, one could argue each case at length, but there are two key points we should not forget: 1. for most of us our cholesterol is too high and may cause us problems -- so a "lower the better" attitude is sensible. 2. Most of us have tasted the good life and don't want to live like peasant farmers -- I like my wine and cheese on Friday night. So it is a careful trade off between enjoying the good things in life and enough prudence to enjoy a long life.

The trick is sensible guidelines and to get good value out of the not so healthy things: don't have cheese sandwiches every day, but occasionally enjoy the good stuff; it's not: "my cholesterol is high so I'll never eat meat again", rather I'll have it less often, smaller quantity and cut the fat off; I'll have a slice of pizza with the kids, it's a treat, but not a meal replacement because I'm busy!; I'm not an exercise fanatic, but I expect a huge amount from my body 24 hours a day, surely I can find half an hour each day to go for a walk (simply because that's what makes it work properly).

Drugs do have their place, but drugs are not fix alls for heart disease, diabetes, sexual problems, pain etc. Make sure you are acting upon the things over which you have control.

Cholesterol, suggested targets:

As rust is to pipes, cholesterol is to blood vessels. Too much cholesterol and/or triglycerides in your blood may cause fatty deposits to form on the inside walls of the arteries (arteriosclerosis). The deposits may become large enough to block these blood vessels completely, and so prevent normal blood flow. Elevated cholesterol is a major cause of coronary heart disease and stroke -- combined they account for over one quarter of all deaths in Australia.

Regardless of your results the key message is that these changes will reduce your risk of heart disease:

- **any reduction of LDL-Cholesterol**
- **any increase in HDL-Cholesterol**
- **any reduction in Triglyceride**

Important: If your cholesterol is above ideal, but you are doing all you can (within reason) to improve it -- be glad of your efforts. Your proactive approach is reducing your coronary risk. Not only because you are keeping the cholesterol to a minimum -- you are also reducing other risk factors (diabetes, overweight, inactivity etc.) that work with cholesterol in causing heart problems. In fact, coronary risk factors tend to multiply each other's effect rather than simply adding to the total risk. So if a future blood test shows you are not at the "ideal" don't be disheartened -- keep up the effort as you are still gaining real benefits.

There are varied professional opinions regarding target or ideal values for blood lipids.

< = less than
> = greater than

Reference ranges presented by pathology providers do vary, thus the following may not match those on a pathology report you have received. The following are generally published targets:

Total Cholesterol < 5.5 HDL Cholesterol >1.0 LDL Cholesterol < 3.5 Triglyceride < 2.0

Here are generally accepted "ideal" guidelines:

Total Cholesterol < 4.0 HDL Cholesterol >1.0 LDL Cholesterol < 2.5 Triglyceride < 2.0

Keeping total cholesterol below 4.0 is particularly important for people who have a personal or family history of heart disease. Also, for those with other risk factors including smoking, diabetes, overweight or those who are physically inactive.

For more detailed information see: www.heartfoundation.com.au. You will find downloads with extensive guidelines and information; also references to particular population groups.

Medication is an option for some people with elevated cholesterol. Whether or not medication is appropriate for you is a decision you make in association with your doctor. If you are medicated for high cholesterol I strongly suggest that a proactive approach to the lifestyle factors in cholesterol management remains a priority.

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How Do You Rate Yourself?

	Rating	Goals and Actions
Physical activity		
Body weight		
Alcohol		
Cigarettes		
Dietary fibre intake		
Dietary fat intake		
Sugar intake		
Fluid intake		
Stress management		
Time to relax		
Back care exercises		
Cholesterol/Triglyceride		
Skin self checking		
Check stools for blood		
Breast/Testicular self check		
PAP test		
Mammogram		
Prostate check		
Dental check up		
Looking after the environment		

Print this page, then enter a "Rating" from 1 to 5 as to how well you take care of yourself in that particular area. 5 means that you are very proactive in managing that particular aspect of your lifestyle; 3 means there is room for improvement, 1 means it is in a pretty bad way.

This is not designed as a detailed analysis. Just approximate how you are going for each point, for example: "Dietary Fibre Intake" ask yourself: do I eat whole meal bread, include plenty of vegetables, have a couple of pieces of fruit each day, choose whole grain cereals and so on?

Use the low ratings to identify areas that may be improved -- opportunities to invest in your future health and well being.

Enter "Goals and Actions" in the space provided. Make a diary note to revisit the table two monthly.

Don't do this in a hurry (it's far too important), take some time to ponder where you are at and how you can make positive change in the context of the other demands on your energy and time.

have a great day



I established the Its Time Foundation -- my way of giving something back. We create new education opportunities for children in remote low income communities; by replacing diesel generators with solar or wind power and diverting the money saved on fuel to education. It also reduces carbon dioxide emissions. Please visit www.iitime.org or if you are a rugby fan visit www.rugbythanks.org.