

Recommending new guidelines for lowering cholesterol, the American Heart Association, teamed up with the nation's biggest drug makers, urging physicians to prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins to reduce LDL [low density lipoprotein] to 70. Dropping the benchmark number from 100 to 70 adds about 7 million new patients to the 36 million already taking statin drugs—increasing sales by 20%.

A "Ispaghula/Psyllium" for High Cholesterol What is Psyllium?

Psyllium comes from the crushed seeds of the *Plantago ovata* plant, an herb native to parts of Asia, Mediterranean regions of Europe, and North Africa. The psyllium seed husks have been used in herbal remedies. Similar to oats and wheat, psyllium is rich in soluble fiber. Traditionally, psyllium is used as a gentle bulk-forming laxative for constipation.

Psyllium for High Cholesterol

Soluble fiber from psyllium forms a gel when mixed with liquid. Recently, the FDA approved a health claim:

3g to 12g soluble fiber from psyllium seed husk when included as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Studies have shown that psyllium is effective in lowering total cholesterol and LDL (the Bad cholesterol) levels.

Metamucil, made by Procter & Gamble, contains the soluble fiber psyllium. While it has been approved for sale only as a laxative, Metamucil also seems to lower cholesterol.

For example, in six studies, ten grams a day (about three teaspoons of regular flavor) for one to four months dropped cholesterol by four to fifteen percent.

Talk to your Doctor if you are concerned about your Cholesterol

To learn more:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Health Information Center

Phone: 301-592-8573

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/infoctr/index.htm

The National Women's Health Information Center

Phone: 1-800-994-WOMAN
(1-800-994-9662)

1-888-220-5446 for the hearing impaired

www.4women.gov/faq/cholesterol.htm

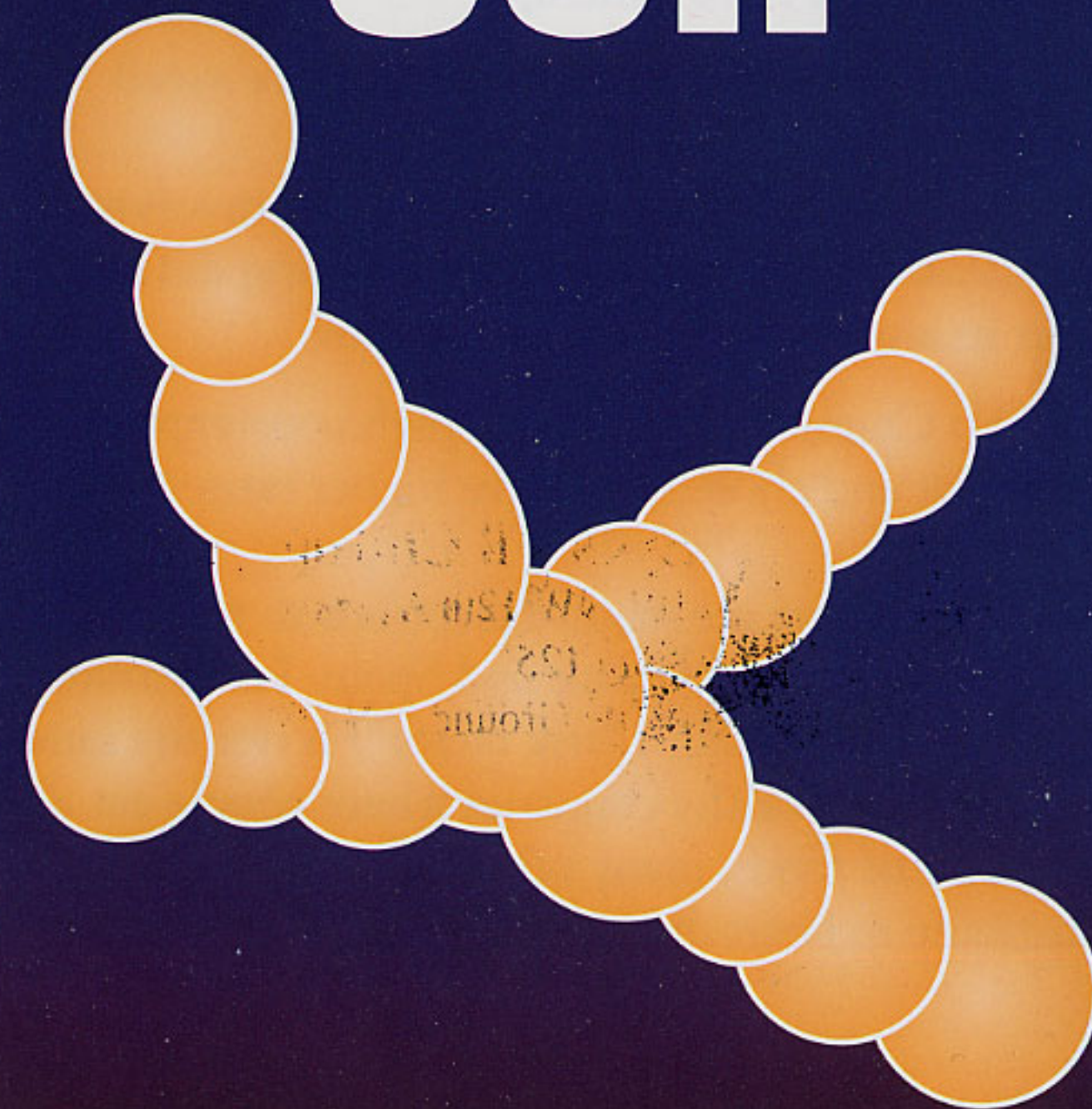


Synsvoll Chiropractic
101 NW 12th Avenue
Suite 125
Battle Ground, WA 98604

NeuroTCA

Neuropathy
Treatment
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America

The Cholesterol Con



Myths & Truths

MYTH: People with high cholesterol are more prone to heart attacks.

TRUTH: Young and middle-aged men with cholesterol levels over 350 are slightly more at risk for heart attacks. Those who have cholesterol levels just below 350 are at no greater risk than those whose cholesterol is very low. For elderly men and for women of all ages, high-cholesterol is associated with a longer lifespan.

MYTH: Cholesterol & saturated fat clog arteries.

TRUTH: There is very little cholesterol or saturated fat in the arterial plaque or clogs. Most of the material is a calcium deposit akin to lime and most of the fatty acids are unsaturated.

MYTH: Eating saturated fat and cholesterol-rich foods will cause cholesterol levels to rise and make people more susceptible to heart disease.

TRUTH: Many studies show no relationship between diet and cholesterol levels; there is no evidence that saturated fat and cholesterol rich food contribute to heart disease. As Americans have cut back on saturated fat and cholesterol rich foods, rates of heart disease have gone up.

MYTH: Cholesterol-lowering drugs have saved many lives.

TRUTH: In the two most recent trials, involving over 10,000 subjects, cholesterol lowering did not result in any improvement in outcome.

MYTH: Countries that have a high consumption of animal fat and cholesterol have higher rates of heart disease.

TRUTH: There are many exceptions to this observation, such as France and Spain. Furthermore, an association (called a "risk factor") is not the same as a cause. In wealthy countries where people eat a lot of animal foods, many other factors exist that can contribute to heart disease.

Statins and Mortality

According to medical opinion leaders, recent trials with statin drugs have proven that LDL reduction is beneficial. Allegedly, these trials have also shown that the greater the LDL reductions, the better.

First, it must be emphasized that statin drugs have only been shown to exert consistent mortality-lowering benefits in a select group of patients; namely, middle-aged males with existing Chronic Heart Disease.

Statins may also lower mortality in diabetic patients. Trials with men free of heart disease have not shown any consistent and significant mortality-lowering benefit from the use of statin drugs.

In women of any age, statins have not been shown to exert any reduction in cardiovascular or all-cause mortality whatsoever when used for primary prevention, and no reduction in all-cause mortality when used for secondary prevention. The only study to date focusing on elderly subjects, the PROSPER trial, did find a reduction in cardiovascular deaths, but this was negated by a similar increase in cancer mortality. Rarely mentioned are two studies showing that lovastatin was associated with increased all-cause mortality in healthy hypercholesterolemic males and females.

In those trials showing decreased mortality with statins, the reduction in death rates are no greater than, and often inferior to, that seen with other less toxic interventions, such as omega-3 fatty acid supplementation, fruit-and-vegetable-rich diets, and exercise.

Secondly, the claim that LDL reduction is responsible for any statin-induced reduction in cardiovascular events or mortality rates is unsupported.

(Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons Fall 2005)

The Many Vital Roles of Cholesterol

Cholesterol is produced by almost every cell in the body.

Cholesterol in cell membranes makes cells waterproof so there can be a different chemistry on the inside and the outside of the cell.

Cholesterol, nature's repair substance, used to repair wounds including tears and irritations in the arteries.

Many important hormones are made of cholesterol including hormones that regulate mineral metabolism and blood sugar, hormones that help us deal with stress, and all the sex hormones, such as testosterone, estrogen and progesterone.

Cholesterol is vital to the function of the brain and nervous system.

Cholesterol protects us against depression; it plays a role in the utilization of serotonin, the body's "feel-good" chemical.

The bile salts, needed for the digestion of fats, are made from cholesterol.

Cholesterol is the precursor of vitamin D, which is formed by the action of ultra-violet (UV-B) light on cholesterol in the skin.

Cholesterol is a powerful antioxidant that protects us against free radicals and therefore against cancer.

Cholesterol, especially LDL-cholesterol (the so-called bad cholesterol), helps fight infection.