



for your best health

LIFESTYLE RISK FACTORS

Ask Your Pharmacist

The benefits of olive oil and fresh produce were first recognized by medical researchers almost five decades ago. Researchers have been turning up more and more evidence to confirm these early findings. Recently research published in the July 4, 2006 issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Dr. Ramon Estruch, from the Hospital Clinic in Spain, compared the short-term effects of two Mediterranean diets versus those of a low-fat diet on intermediate markers of cardiovascular risk. His findings confirm that Mediterranean-style diets, rich in healthy fats, are even better than conventional low-fat diets at improving cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Heart disease kills more people each year than any other cause.

For some time now, the low incidence of coronary artery disease in Mediterranean countries has been attributed to the dietary habits of the people in that region. However, doctors meeting in Barcelona, Spain, for the World Congress of Cardiology warn that traditional Mediterranean-style diets - rich in vegetables, fruit, fish and olive oil, but sparing in meat, are under threat from fast foods. In Spain, Italy and Greece, younger people are increasingly turning away from traditional family meals in favor of burgers and fries. "The Mediterranean diet is changing. Young people are not eating well today - obesity is increasing and we are losing our diet," lamented Dr Ramon Estruch of the University of Barcelona.

As heart-disease specialists from every corner of the globe converged on Barcelona, Spain, for the World Congress of Cardiology, they also discussed portion sizes and the subsequent over consumption of food. Experts suggested that over-consumption follows in the foot steps of robust economic growth. Dr. Valentin Fuster opined that "When people work hard and long hours, they don't have as much time to prepare meals at home, so they go out to eat," With restaurants competing with for ever increasing portion sizes, as more and more people eat out the over flowing plates are filled with food more often than not, prepared with unhealthy fats and oils. Dr Fuster, states that "Heart-healthy eating is not just about diet," he said. "We also have to teach people to eat less."

British researcher Elio Riboli, who along with others studied almost 400,000 people from 10 countries, reported that just two portions of nuts a week cuts the risk of dying from a heart attack by 11 percent. The varieties of nuts included in the study were almonds, walnuts, cashews, Brazilian nuts and traditional peanuts.

Earlier studies have found eating nuts was linked to a lower risk of bowel cancer. Studies have also shown that nuts can lower cholesterol, reduce inflammation and improve the functioning of arteries. Scientists believe that the benefits

come from the high concentration of Omega-3 fatty acids in nuts.

Some risk factors for heart disease cannot be changed, such as genetics. Many factors come together to create heart problems. A person who doesn't have a genetic risk may develop heart disease due to smoking, not exercising, and eating poorly; whereas a genetically at-risk individual who eats healthfully and exercises regularly may never develop heart disease.

While you can't change your genetics, here are some of the risk factors you can change.

High blood cholesterol - Consuming a diet high in saturated fats increases your total cholesterol level more than anything else; dietary changes often yield favorable results.

High blood pressure - One in four American adults has high blood pressure, which overworks the heart and blood vessels, eventually causing heart enlargement and failure, kidney failure, and hardening of the arteries. Diet and other lifestyle changes may reduce high blood pressure.

Cigarette smoking - Smoking-related illnesses kill an average of 442,398 Americans each year, with 33.5% of these deaths being cardiovascular related.

Diabetes - Proper diabetes management, through diet and exercise, can drastically reduce diabetes-related heart disease risk.

Overweight - About 65.4% of the adult population is overweight or obese, a condition that usually coexists with high blood cholesterol, and stresses the entire cardiovascular system.

Physical inactivity - Exercise stimulates blood flow and keeps the heart healthy; a sedentary lifestyle has been linked with drastically increased risk for heart disease.

People vary widely in their greatest risk factors for heart disease. Two people may be at equal risk for developing the disease, but from completely different factors. Contact our pharmacist today for a personalized assessment of your risk factors.

What about supplementation?

Modern day foods - processed, packaged, and preserved - contain few of the potent nutrients that our bodies so desperately need. For this reason, pharmacists often recommend supplementation with certain vitamins and other nutrients to fill in the gaps of our diet. This cannot be truer than with heart health. Our circulatory systems greatly benefit from chemicals called antioxidants, found in vitamins A, C, E and other nutrients. Unfortunately, our diets often cannot sufficiently meet this need. New studies show that even orange juice, known for its high content of heart-healthy vitamin C, can lose its vitamin punch after being

Visit our pharmacy or website to learn more about lifestyle risk factors.

LIFESTYLE RISK FACTORS (continued)

opened. Two to four weeks after purchase, orange juice from a carton may contain less than half its original level of vitamin C, according to a study from Arizona State University East. Contact our pharmacist today to learn more about custom supplementation for a healthy heart.

Can supplementation help to improve my total cholesterol?

High total blood cholesterol increases your risk of heart disease. If your cholesterol is moderately high, your doctor may recommend changing your diet and beginning a regular exercise program. If dietary changes fail to lower your cholesterol level, your doctor may recommend a variety of prescription medications.

Many patients are now choosing natural medicines for cholesterol management, rather than a lifetime supply of medications that often carry side effects. Research has consistently shown that nutritional supplements can significantly improve blood cholesterol levels. Let's take a look at some of the most recommended supplements for cholesterol management.

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Marine Fish Oils contain omega-3 fatty acids, the "good" fats that maintain cell function and may help to improve cholesterol.

Niacin, commonly known as vitamin B3, has been shown to help lower total cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Multivitamin and mineral supplements contain many essential vitamins and minerals that maintain overall health, so that all parts of the body work together in harmony, free from the buildup of harmful agents like excess cholesterol.

Garlic has been proven to effectively lower total cholesterol by improving the "good" HDL cholesterol, and lowering the "bad" LDL cholesterol.

Fiber removes excess cholesterol from the body.

Antioxidant Essentials, such as vitamins C and E, protect the cardiovascular system from damaging chemicals called free radicals, resulting in better overall heart health.

Other supplements often recommended for cholesterol management include: Vitamin E, Guggulipid, L-Carnitine, Coenzyme Q10, Flaxseed Oil, Green Tea, and Psyllium Fiber. Our pharmacist will be happy to discuss these supplements with you.

My doctor prescribed a "statin" drug. Should I supplement with CoQ10?

Cholesterol-lowering medications called "statins" are among the most commonly prescribed drugs for reduction of heart disease risk due to cholesterol levels. Statin drugs, including atorvastatin (Lipitor), fluvastatin (Lescol), lovastatin (Mevacor), pravastatin (Pravachol), simvastatin (Zocor), and rosuvastatin (Crestor), work directly on the liver to reduce cholesterol production and increase cholesterol removal.

However, statins may also reduce your body's level of coenzyme Q10, or CoQ10, a vital nutrient necessary for the function of every cell, and important for the prevention of oxidative damage caused by free oxygen radicals. By reducing CoQ10 levels, statin drugs may contribute to the very disease they aim to prevent. Supplementing with CoQ10 may help to reverse this process, by increasing CoQ10 levels during statin use. Contact our pharmacist today for guidance in choosing the best supplement.

I'm taking several medications and supplements. Could this be dangerous?

All chemicals that enter the body interact with each other and the body itself. For example, grapefruit juice has been shown to increase the effectiveness of some statin drugs, resulting in damage to the muscles and other tissues. Some medications used for high blood pressure, such as calcium channel blockers (verapamil, Procardia, Adalat, and many others) may cause nutrient depletions leading to fatigue. Nutritional supplementation may help to prevent depletion, but these supplements may

then interact dangerously with your other medications. You should always consult with your pharmacist before self-supplementing, especially if you are taking multiple medications. Contact our pharmacist to learn more about our life-saving medication review, which will examine your medications and supplements for interactions, depletions, and other safety issues.