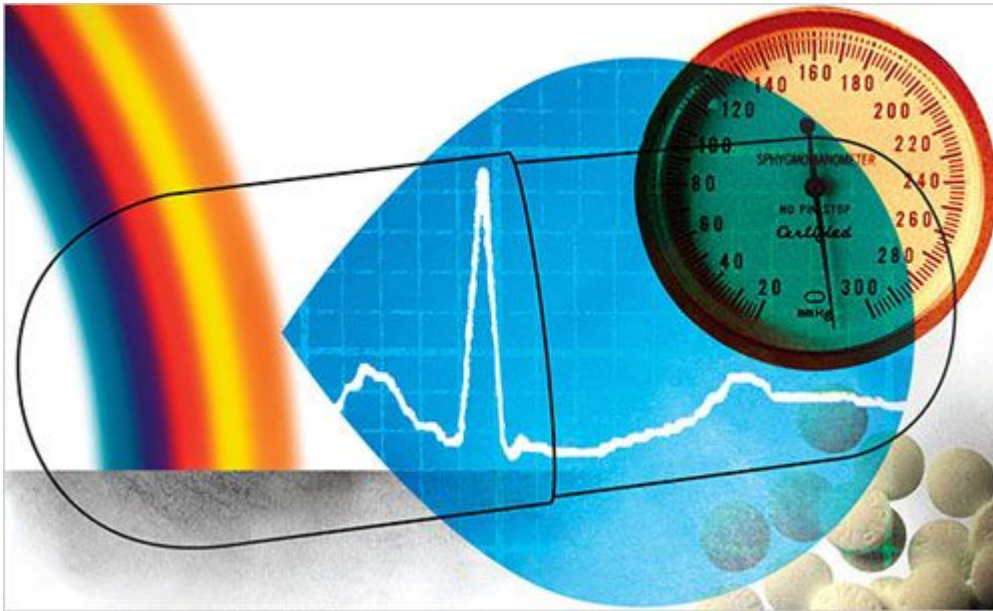


Cholesterol Essential for Good Health



Two new studies show that cholesterol protects against neurological dysfunction and reduces risk of cancer. Cholesterol has long been recognized as an essential element in our bodies. Every cell in your body contains cholesterol where it functions as an important structural building block and helps protect against destructive free radicals. It is required in order to make vitamin D and hormones such as testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone. Nerve cells have higher amounts of cholesterol than other cells because nerve cells do not split and divide like other cells and so they need the extra cholesterol to live longer. Yes, cholesterol helps our nerve tissues live longer.

Scientists have found that cholesterol is not just a structural element in nerve tissue, but is needed for healthy nerve and brain function. A recent study¹ has demonstrated that cholesterol is absolutely vital for proper nerve transmission.

This new discovery adds more troubling implications to the widespread use of cholesterol-lowering statin drugs. Statins interfere with liver function and block its ability to make cholesterol. Less cholesterol in the blood means less is available for making and maintaining the health of cell membranes, reduces the body's ability to form vitamin D and essential hormones. It also interferes with the body's ability to maintain healthy nerve and brain tissues. This may explain why rates of depression, memory loss, and suicide are higher among statin users.

The new study adds a brand new explanation for nerve and muscle related problems from taking statins. Researchers studied the structure of an important neurotransmitter receptor called the nicotinic acetylcholine receptor. Cholesterol is absolutely vital to this receptor

working correctly and is part of the protein structure of this receptor. Problems with this receptor's function, drastically alters nerve transmission. This new discovery offers a new explanation as to why statins have so many devastating nerve and muscle side effects.

Research has shown that people taking cholesterol lowering drugs die more frequently from a variety of causes than those that don't take the drugs. While statin drugs have many side effects, some of the detrimental effects of using these drugs also come as a result of lowering the cholesterol. Even those who don't take statin drugs who have low blood cholesterol are at risk.

Another recent study² has shown that low cholesterol levels increase the risk of developing cancer. Even low amounts LDL cholesterol, the so-called bad cholesterol which is believed to be the most problematic, increases risk. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that LDL level of 100 ml/dL or less for prevention and no more than 70 for high risk patients. In the new study an LDL level of 107, which is above the AHA safety level, was associated with a 33 percent increased risk of cancer and death, an LDL level of 87 was associated with a 50 percent increased risk. As the LDL goes lower the risk keeps getting worse. The LDL levels set by the AHA were chosen arbitrary by "experts" with direct financial ties to the statin industry. They knew full well that reaching their artificially low target levels for LDL would require larger doses of statin drugs thus dramatically increasing sales (which has indeed happened).

The results of this new study was so alarming that the study authors challenged other researchers to examine their data for any possible errors and called for a statistical reanalysis of the data from all other existing cholesterol studies, using better statistical models that actually reflect true risk. The results of this new research led the authors to conclude "A low LDL cholesterol level is not necessarily associated with optimal clinical outcomes but is a predictor of cancer and death."

In the current study the ideal LDL cholesterol level was found to be 126. The researchers were able to identify a bell shaped curve, in terms of a departure in either direction from this ideal number. LDL over 146 or less than 107 was associated with 33 percent increased risk of cancer. LDL over 164 or less than 87 was associated with a 50 percent increased risk. The risk keeps getting worse the higher or lower the number progresses away from the ideal of 126. LDL in the range of 108 – 145 had no statistically significant cancer risk, although being in the center of this range is clearly best.

There have been a number of studies in the past that link low cholesterol and cancer risk. However, these studies could not prove that the cancer was not already there prior to the start of the study – which has been the main argument used (besides statistical

manipulation) by the statin industry to deny the association. In the new study this issue was taken into account by eliminating participants with less than 2.5 years follow-up after the start of the study, thus demonstrating that the results were not due to preexisting cancer. ■

References

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