

Cholesterol: Dangerous gunk? Or, just plain bunk?

Is cholesterol really the cause of heart disease?

Todd R. Nordstrom

HAVEN'T WE ALL HEARD ENOUGH about cholesterol? The pharmaceutical ads that promise to lower cholesterol are everywhere. You can't turn on the television without seeing one—promising a reduced risk of heart attack. Today, even the sides of our cereal boxes promote cholesterol-lowering properties. So, it's no surprise that for the last two decades the American public has been squeamishly avoiding the one thing that has been deemed the evil cause of the heart disease epidemic in America—cholesterol.

Oh, but wait a second. Oops. There is one little glitch to the cholesterol theory—one teeny tiny tidbit of information that seems to elude all the media hype. Even though the American public consumes less cholesterol than ever before, the incidence of heart disease continues to rise at a staggering pace. That's right, no matter what we do or what they say, the statistics of heart disease are getting worse.

So, is cholesterol dangerous gunk? Or, is the whole theory just plain bunk?

"More people develop heart disease today than ever before," says Dr. Dwight Lundell, a heart surgeon with more than 25 years of experience

and co-author of the new book *The Cure for Heart Disease*. "Every 34 seconds a person in this country dies of a heart attack. That's a terrifying statistic—every single day that's 2500 people who die of a disease we can cure. Sure, medical community has introduced fantastic new technologies to prolong life—I played a role in the development of some of those technologies. But, we (the medical community) can't keep up with the growing incidence of the disease. More people live with the disease than ever before in history."

Let's be blunt, we're tired of hearing the discussion about cholesterol because nothing changes except our dining satisfaction—no more red meats, no more eggs, and no more of the good stuff that fed our nation for centuries.

"We're chasing the wrong cause of heart disease," says Dr. Lundell. "If the American public knew the real reasons people develop and die from heart disease, the statistics of heart disease could be dramatically reduced. It's time to quit chasing cures that aren't backed by science—like the cholesterol theory. That's the simple truth."

Dr. Lundell, a heart surgeon with more than 5000 surgeries to his credit, granted people a second

chance at life every single day. Lundell specialized in coronary bypass surgery. He was the poster-child for traditional medicine. In fact, he still is. So, why is he challenging the cholesterol theory?

"The reason cholesterol has been blamed for so long is because it's at the forefront of the discussion," says Dr. Lundell. "We know that certain foods contain cholesterol. And, our bodies manufacture cholesterol. We actually need cholesterol. It's not the substance that is killing millions of Americans."

According to Dr. Lundell, cholesterol is vital to human life. Up to 50% of all cell walls are made up of cholesterol. Cholesterol is the precursor to many critical compounds and hormones.

"Approximately 80% of cholesterol is manufactured in the body," says Dr. Lundell. "Almost all cells can make cholesterol. However, the majority is synthesized in the liver. Healthy people maintain a relatively constant blood cholesterol level no matter how much cholesterol they eat. If we consume more cholesterol at the dinner table, then our liver makes less cholesterol to even it out. The synthesis of cholesterol is controlled mostly by insulin. The pancreas pro-

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duces insulin as a response to ingested sugars and starches—to control blood sugar levels. High levels of insulin, resulting from high intake of sugars and starches, stimulate the production of cholesterol and disrupt the normal control (or balancing) mechanisms of the body."

So, cholesterol is necessary? And, it's not unhealthy?

"It is necessary," says Dr. Lundell. "Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) carries cholesterol to the tissues for all types of biologic processes—most of which are healthy. However in the

presence of high blood sugar or from oxidative stress, the LDL experiences chemical changes and the body interprets it as dangerous."

Have we all been barking up the wrong tree to find a cure for heart disease? Is there no evidence to support the cholesterol theory?

"There are numerous studies that aim to find a correlation between dietary cholesterol and heart disease," says Dr. Lundell. "The truth of the matter is that only half of the people who get heart disease have elevated cholesterol levels. That's not good science. If I would have been wrong 50% of the times I performed open bypass surgery, I would

have banned from practice."

The Cure for Heart Disease, co-authored by Dr. Lundell and Todd Nordstrom details what Lundell considers the real cause of heart disease and how it can be cured—simply, safely, and biologically.

"I think the general public is in for a real surprise," said Dr. Lundell. "The cure for a national epidemic exists. It's not complicated. And, it's about time—because heart disease shouldn't exist."

Todd Nordstrom lives in Scottsdale, Arizona with his wife and three children. He is the Editor of a magazine, a chronic author, and an avid marathon runner.

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