

Are You Suffering From Cholesterol Phobia?

Have Two Eggs and Call Me in the Morning

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Cholesterol. Poor, misunderstood cholesterol.

It reminds me of a story. Once upon a time, there was a terrible fire raging at a local warehouse. The fire department and their trucks were there fighting to put it out. A newspaper reporter showed up on the scene a bit later. Putting one and one together, he came up with the most obvious headline: "Large truck and men in uniforms set fire to warehouse!" Well, that's what it looked like. The fire was raging, and they were there. Circumstantial evidence.

Sound far-fetched? How about this?

A person has artery disease. A pathologist looks at the diseased artery and sees cholesterol there. Headline: "Cholesterol Causes Arterial Disease". If that's not enough, the cry follows "Ban cholesterol. It is evil and bad." Poor, misunderstood cholesterol.

In an unbiased court of reasoning, the defense attorney for cholesterol would have a chance to talk. He may state any and all of the following:

1. Studies in nursing homes show that on average the higher the cholesterol the longer the people lived.
2. In nursing homes, the higher the cholesterol, the less dementia.
3. Cholesterol protects against leaky gut syndrome.
4. Vitamin D is made from cholesterol
5. Progesterone, estrogen, and testosterone are made from cholesterol.
6. Cholesterol is used to make anti stress hormones.
7. Certain types of strokes increase with low cholesterol.
8. Cholesterol is needed to make bile which is necessary to digest fats.
9. Cholesterol is needed to make nerve cell insulation.
10. Cholesterol is a major essential part of the immune system.

And the list can go on and on.

So, what can the prosecutor say to the judge and jury about cholesterol? They can say that some studies show that high cholesterol may be related to heart and coronary disease. Many studies show that 50% of the people with heart disease have high cholesterol. That's right ...50%! What does that tell you?

Furthermore, the defense attorney can ask for studies that show the beneficial effects of high cholesterol being lowered. That would be a bad question for the prosecutor. There are no definitive studies on that.

This sounds crazy. Where did this cholesterol phobia come from then?

Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in ALL cells of the body. If it is so bad, why is it everywhere?

Additionally, not only is it everywhere, but your body produces it! It makes it from raw materials that you eat.

Does this sound like something evil? It is in every cell. It is made by our bodies. It is necessary for so many vital life processes. Or does it sound like something essential and health promoting? That's right, not only are we saying that it isn't bad, but that it is good. Take a breath. Repeat after me cholesterol is good!

This is reprogramming time. The purpose here is not just to think that cholesterol is not bad. Or that some may be good. The purpose here is to understand it is good and essential.

There is a problem. If you have been living in this country beginning in the 1960s or later, you have been bombarded both from the media and probably your family doctor that cholesterol is bad. That you shouldn't eat it. You must lower it.

Circumstantial evidence. And propaganda. You know, if you say something often enough, it begins to sound like the truth, no matter how crazy it is.

By the way, if you have been around for 40 or more years, you probably have noticed a new medical business that has cropped up that wasn't there in your youth—at least not to any large degree. The infertility clinic. Years ago, the problem was that women got pregnant too fast or too easily. Now, there is a huge percentage of the population that can't get pregnant. Or need medical help. It's hard to get pregnant if you don't have the raw material (cholesterol) your body needs to make the essential hormones (testosterone or estrogen and progesterone).

There are different ideas about how we got off track. Where did this deception begin? Or to be kind, where the confusion began. Most of the stories have to do with money—you know that saying, follow the money. But, I don't run after such

theories, because I believe most people want what's best for you. So let's just call it confusion.

Back to our original story, artery disease led to examination led to findings of cholesterol in the artery. All true. But, why was it there? Could it be that the body took a substance we eat and put it in the place most likely to kill us? Hardly. If that were the case, we would all be dead by now.

Let's look at another possibility. Your artery has two main jobs. When your heart pumps blood away from itself, it pumps into a tube. This tube is the artery taking blood away into the far reaches of your body. The artery has two main jobs. First, it is elastic. When blood fills the first area of the tube since it is elastic, and it expands and gets wider. Then, somewhat like a rubber band, it squeezes back to its original size and pushes the blood further to the next segment. That area expands and then contracts and blood gets sent further on its way. So, the artery must be elastic. The second quality of the artery is that it shouldn't leak. We can't have blood leaking all over the place out of the artery. It has to both hold blood inside (until it is the appropriate time for it to seep out) and be elastic enough to push it along on its path.

What happens if the artery begins to spring a leak? Let's say that the artery has been subjected to tremendous stressors like sugar, bad oils, heavy metals, anxiety, anguish and so on. Eventually, the lining of the artery begins to perforate and there are small holes forming. This is an emergency that must be dealt with immediately. The artery wall cannot be allowed to break down as this would allow blood to seep out of the artery and cause local problems where it escapes leaving the next level of the artery without enough blood. The body must begin emergency repairs. It must take something or create something to cement the holes before they get bigger. The hard substance used to patch the artery lining is cholesterol. Yes, it gets laid down on the artery wall as a cement-like patch. This compromises the elasticity of the artery, but keeps it from leaking. A compromise and the best that can be done.

There is a consequence to this cholesterol remedy that is worth looking at now. We have a heart whose main job is to pump adequate blood throughout the body. From the head to the tip of the toes. It does this by pumping blood into the artery and the artery as mentioned, expands. It then pushes blood further along

as it contracts. Meanwhile the heart continues to pump and push blood into the top region again and again. This continues day and night with the heart pumping and the arteries contracting. They make a great team. But, let's say that the body has to cement a hole (cholesterol to the rescue) and give up some of its elasticity. This means that it is going to be harder to pump blood throughout the body. Well, don't worry-again the body has a built in resolution. Just have the heart pump harder to get the blood along its way. The body has to raise its blood pressure to accomplish this goal. If dealing with high blood pressure, it makes sense to know why it is high! It might be a compensatory reaction by the body to make sure blood gets everywhere it should.

You may notice a pattern in our thinking. Cholesterol is there—let's ask why and be pleasantly surprised that our body hasn't taken a substance from our food or made a substance which is hard as cement and placed it in our arteries. That's right, our body is NOT trying to kill us. In the same manner, if our blood pressure is high-if our body raises the pumping force of our heart, is it an error or an attempt to make sure blood gets everywhere it needs to be? Now, with blood pressure, things can go wrong, so if it is high, it doesn't have to be a good compensation from the wisdom of the body, but it might be.

Let's do a little history search to try to make sense of this. Around 100 years ago, it was shown in Russia that rabbits fed cholesterol developed high cholesterol and hardening of the arteries. Later studies showed that rabbits process differently than people (surprise!) and that this occurred specifically if the rabbits were hypothyroid. We see this also in people with high blood cholesterol, especially if combined with low blood fat (low triglycerides), is directly related to the thyroid. But even in people, the fact that there may be high blood cholesterol does not mean that the body will deposit this excess cholesterol in your arteries, the place it may kill you.

Later on, around 50 years later, we come upon the studies about saturated fat. What could sound worse than saturated fat? Fat is bad enough, but when you saturate it, it sounds downright deadly. Can't science find some way to save us and unsaturate it?

Popular mainstream storytelling preaches that saturated fat is bad for many reasons, one is that it raises cholesterol. There are so many things wrong with

this. It is almost as ridiculous as the notion that eating too much cholesterol raises the levels of your blood cholesterol. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

As a side note, I wish eating saturated fat would raise cholesterol. Then, I could have my patients who have much too LOW cholesterol just eat some good saturated fat and their cholesterol could go up to a normal level. It's just not that easy.

Speaking of normal cholesterol levels, let's look at a few myths here also. When I began in practice, a cholesterol level of between 220 and 280 was normal. Slowly, over the years, it came down more and more until now many doctors are not satisfied unless it is below 180. And, some seem to have no bottom line-it can't go low enough! (Reread the brief notes on studies in the beginning of this article to see the absurdity of this)

Also, just for accuracy, there is no such thing as good and bad cholesterol. Cholesterol is just what it is. To get around the body, it is carried by proteins of different weights and sizes. Those carriers of low density are called "bad" and those of high are called "good", but the cholesterol that is being carried is the same in both.

The health issue in both situations, as we are seeing with almost everything else, has to do with inflammation. Even some mainstream writers are now acknowledging that cholesterol isn't really "the evil", it has to do with inflammation.

Some good blood markers to measure inflammation are available and include C Reactive Protein and Homocysteine. If you want real measures of your health, have these checked. And don't forget a complete thyroid panel, especially if cholesterol is high, and triglycerides are low.

Let's close this with a word on the remedy for the problem that doesn't exist. Statin Drugs. These are given to people "suffering" with high cholesterol.

Statins block an enzyme in the liver that helps make cholesterol. Unfortunately, they also interfere with the production of CoQ10, which your body makes and is essential for a healthy heart. How is that for irony? If someone is for some reason taking a statin drug, they should certainly consider CoQ10.

Statins are also well known for being implicated in many muscle and nerve problems. I have seen people get improvement with their symptoms of back and leg pain as well as peripheral neuropathy by stopping their statin drugs. There is also concern that statins may be involved with memory loss. This is not surprising, since cholesterol is essential for proper brain function!

One of my most gratifying moments is seeing the look of happiness on one's face who becomes deprogrammed, and begins to understand all of this. "You mean, I can eat the whole egg?" they ask. "Yes!" I answer. "Once a week or twice is ok?," they ask. "Every day, if you want," I answer. Big smiles all around.

The end of cholesterol phobia is a wonderful thing!