

[IMAGE]

Cholesterol and Kids: Wait, Don't Medicate

By Editorial Staff

Believe it or not, kids are developing high cholesterol these days, and they're actually being put on medication to help reduce it. Funny thing is, research suggests it may go down naturally - without the need for drugs.

High cholesterol is no laughing matter, whether you're an adult or a child, but cholesterol-lowering prescription medication doesn't need to be the stock solution, particularly when an abundance of research indicates that lifestyle modifications such as exercise and diet can make a significant dent in the problem. Add to that the results of a recent study which suggests children with even very high cholesterol levels may experience a drop over time - without drugs or other interventions.

The study, published in *Pediatrics*, found that some children with high cholesterol levels at baseline (and warranting drug intervention according to guidelines) had levels after four years that no longer would require intervention. As the study authors concluded: "There can be large changes in extreme levels of LDL [low-density lipoprotein or 'bad'] cholesterol ... and practitioners should be aware that very high levels may decrease substantially in the absence of any intervention."

Cholesterol and Kids - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Some children (and adults) with a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol or who fail to improve after conservative interventions (diet, exercise) may need to take cholesterol-lowering medication, but it's important to understand that the majority develop high cholesterol as a consequence of poor diet or obesity, both of which can be modified.

Consider this recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics on how to manage children with cholesterol (courtesy of WebMD): "For kids who are overweight or obese and who have a high blood-fat level or low level of 'good' HDL cholesterol, weight management is the primary treatment. This means improved diet with nutritional counseling and increased physical exercise." Drug management should be considered only in children ages 8 or older who have extremely high cholesterol and a family history of early heart disease.

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