

[IMAGE]

Lifestyle Changes to Keep Cholesterol in the Safe Range

By Julie T. Chen, MD

How many people do you know who are perpetually concerned about their cholesterol? I bet you know at least one person – in fact, it could be *you*. That's because high cholesterol is one of the leading health concerns of Americans. In my integrative medicine clinic, I see at least one person every day with high cholesterol issues.

Although I am constantly addressing this issue with my patients and to their credit, many of them have gotten their levels into the normal range without medications simply through lifestyle changes...I am very well aware that these lifestyle changes are easier said than done.

So, how can a person get their cholesterol under control using lifestyle changes? Here are the top three facets of your life you need to change in order to be successful:

- Daily activity must be a priority
- Practicing mindful eating is a must
- It's vital to keep your liver healthy

Daily Activity

Exercise is essential to your overall health. Therefore, it stands to reason that it would be important in helping you achieve your cholesterol goals. Most of my patients think daily activity / exercise entails getting into gym clothes and going to the gym for an hour or more. But that doesn't have to be the case. You can just as easily park farther away from your workplace and walk more to work or take the stairs every day at work instead of the elevator. In fact, instead of emailing your work colleague, why not walk to their desk?

The point is to make moving your body a priority every day. Just keep moving. Use every opportunity to increase your activity level daily, whether it's standing and pacing while talking on the phone, or doing sit-ups, push-ups and/or squats while watching TV. The key point is to make exercise something you do naturally in your daily life activities.

Mindful Eating

The second important thing to do to keep your cholesterol in a desirable range is to practice mindful eating. What does that mean? It means you should never be eating when your mind is on something else. You shouldn't snack while working or watching TV. You should make your eating time sacred and focus on what you are putting in your mouth. Many people eat junk food or the foods they shouldn't be eating when they are otherwise preoccupied. So, if you make the times that you eat "sacred times" and pay attention to what you are actually eating, you'll be able to make smarter choices.

Liver Health

The last aspect I want to talk about in respect to your cholesterol levels is your liver health. Your liver is one of the most important organs in your body. It filters toxins, but with respect to cholesterol, it also manages your body's efficiency at lipid / cholesterol metabolism, as well as your sugar metabolism. So, if you take a lot of medication, or supplements, or you drink a lot of alcohol, you are stressing out your liver. As a result, it may not be as capable of processing the sugars and fats from the foods you eat.

If you are able to give your liver more of a "break," in the sense that you don't always overwork it, in the long run, your body will be more efficient at managing the fats and sugars you consume throughout any given day.

Ultimately, the best way to lower cholesterol is to eat clean, drink clean and exercise. I'm sure this advice sounds familiar right? Now you just have to do it. I know you can if you set your mind to it. Talk to your doctor for more information.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

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