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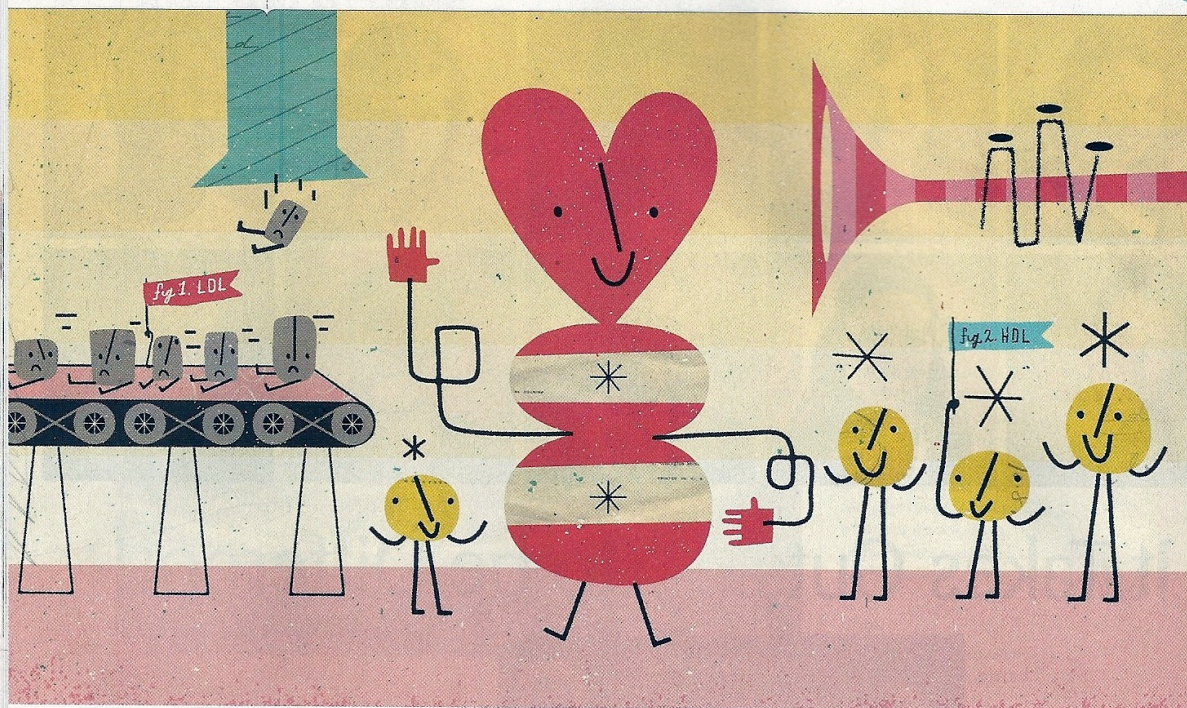


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Vital Advice



How can I lower my cholesterol?

Boost heart health with clean food and targeted exercise.

*** A physician says:** High levels of the fatty substance called low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad” cholesterol, in the blood eventually harden into plaque on artery walls. Plaque buildup narrows arteries, which cuts off the amount of oxygen-carrying blood to your heart; this can cause heart disease or a stroke. High-density lipoprotein (HDL), or “good” cholesterol, helps the body get rid of bad cholesterol.

Treatment: Red yeast rice contains plant sterols that block cholesterol absorption. In some studies, patients lowered their total cholesterol about 25 percent after taking 2.4 grams of the supplement daily. Four to 6 grams a day of omega-3s, found in fatty fish and flaxseed, also reduce artery-hardening triglycerides.

— Michael C. Martin, M.D., internal medicine physician at the Center for Executive Medicine in Dallas

*** A traditional Chinese medicine practitioner says:** We don’t use the term “high cholesterol,” but we can treat the symptoms associated with it, such as poor digestion due to excess phlegm, high blood pressure and being overweight.

Treatment: Have yourself examined. A practitioner would check for symptoms, then make an herbal formula. The Chinese herb *shan zha* (hawthorn berries) can aid digestion and enhance circulation, while *pu-erh*, a Chinese herb tea, has been shown to lower cholesterol. Pour boiling water over a half tablespoon of the herb and let it steep for 15 minutes. Also, you can improve your circulation by getting your blood and *qi* moving with tai chi and *qi gong*.

— Lixing Lao, Ph.D., LAc, director of the TCM Research Program, Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine

*** A nutritionist says:** Only 5 percent of the population has genetically predetermined high cholesterol; the rest of us can control our cholesterol with diet and exercise. Changing what you eat is therefore a much more effective and lasting solution than prescription drugs.

Treatment: Eliminate all sugars from your diet. High cholesterol is the response to the inflammation that results from a diet high in sugar and starch. Instead, eat lean proteins, which stabilize your blood sugar, keep you full and signal your body to burn fat. Also, high-fiber foods (think beans, brown rice, oats, barley and lots of fibrous and non-starchy vegetables) bind excess cholesterol in the gut and move it out through your digestive tract.

— Ariane Hundt, M.S., New York City-based nutritionist and founder of Brooklyn Bridge Boot Camp