

Health & Science



HEALTH FOCUS

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It's flu shot time

search Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston have found that pregnant women are more likely to develop complications from influenza than women in the same age group who are not pregnant. The risk is almost five times greater during the last three months of pregnancy.

Researchers recommend the vaccine for women in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during flu season. Others at risk for contracting the flu include:

- People who are 65 years of age or older.
- People with heart disease.
- People with diabetes, kidney failure, AIDS, cancer or other chronic diseases that have required regular medical visits or hospitalization during the last year.
- People with chronic lung disease, including asthma and bronchitis.
- Children and teenagers on long-

term aspirin therapy, which could put them at risk for Reye's syndrome after getting the flu.

The flu virus strains expected during the 1998-99 flu season are A/Beijing (H1N1), A/Sydney (H3N2) and B/Harbin. This year's vaccine, which is 85 percent effective in helping people avoid influenza, will provide protection against all three of these strains.

Flu shots lower the risk of hospitalization for influenza and pneumonia for people age 65 and older. In addition, the shots can help healthy adults and children avoid the nagging symptoms of fever, muscle pain, fatigue, sore throat, and dry hacking cough that the flu will bring.

Don't let influenza get the best of you this fall and winter; get a flu shot. It's your best defense.

MEASURE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT CHOLESTEROL

1. Which of the following is most likely to raise your blood cholesterol level?

- a) Cholesterol in the diet b) Saturated fats c) Salt d) Sugar

2. Margarine, commercially baked foods (such as doughnuts), and any food cooked with hydrogenated vegetable oils are bad for the heart.

- a) True b) False

3. Ralph and John eat exactly the same breakfast every morning at The Dive Diner: two eggs, four slices of bacon, and a jelly doughnut for dessert. One day they decide it's time to change the routine. Ralph drops the bacon and eggs from his morning meal while John drops the doughnut. Whose cholesterol level is more likely to drop?

- a) Ralph's b) John's c) impossible to tell

4. Cholesterol is an essential substance needed for life. In its pure form, it is white, odorless, waxy, and

is made by the

- a) Kidney b) Pancreas c) Liver d) Bone marrow e) None of the above: You eat cholesterol, you don't make it.

5. We need cholesterol because it helps our bodies

- a) Form cell membranes and manufacture hormones, bile acids, and vitamin D b) Process vitamin C c) Provide energy and strengthen the fibers of smooth muscles

6. In terms of blood cholesterol, which of the following is widely referred to as the "good" kind?

- a) HDL, or high-density lipoprotein cholesterol b) LDL, or low-density lipoprotein cholesterol c) triglycerides

7. This next question centers on olive oil (monounsaturated), corn oil (polyunsaturated), and butter (saturated fats). Going in order from okay for you to not so good for you, how are the three different types of fat

rated? Okay & Not So Good

- a) corn oil, olive oil, butter b) olive oil, corn oil, butter c) corn oil, butter, olive oil d) butter, corn oil, olive oil

8. The best way to increase that "good" cholesterol is

- a) Eat more lean meat b) Donate blood c) Listen to classical music d) All of the above e) None of the above

9. How often should you schedule a blood lipid profile (cholesterol, HDLs, LDLs, triglycerides)?

- a) Every 15 years b) Every year after age 50 c) Every five years after age 20 d) Every year after age 40 e) Never, as long as you eat right and exercise

10. Of the following, which is NOT a way to reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease?

- a) Eating fewer fatty foods b) Lowering your cholesterol by taking niacin c) Quitting smoking d) Becoming more active e) Watching television

Arthritis: The Uncurable Disease

■ Treatment plans may vary depending on the type arthritis you have.

Unfortunately, no known therapy can stop or reverse the disease processes of arthritis. However, early diagnosis and an effective treatment plan can minimize the injury to the joint, decrease joint pain, and improve joint function.

(There are more than 100 different diseases that make up the condition referred to as arthritis.)

For osteoarthritis, in which the cartilage that cushions the bones in a joint deteriorates causing bones to rub against each other, a treatment plan may include a combination of the following:

—Protecting the joints by learning new movement techniques to reduce the joint's workload, avoiding certain activities, reaching an appropriate weight, and using assistive devices. Your health care provider or physical or occupational therapist may recommend some special techniques.

—Exercising the joints with gentle activities such as swimming, walking, riding a stationary bike. Proper exercise keeps the joints supple, helps maintain a good weight, is good for the spirit and self confidence, and can provide a social activity. You may want to discuss various exercises with your health care provider to determine what will work best for you and fit well into your lifestyle.

—Taking medications such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or corticosteroids to reduce joint pain, stiffness, and inflammation.

—Relieving pain temporarily with hot or cold treatments. Warm water baths, heat lamps, electric mitts, and paraffin wax applications help some people, while cold compresses, ice cubes in a wash cloth, or even a bag of frozen vegetables on painful joints are effective for others. Some people find temporary relief from ointments that warm or numb the joint.

—Replacing or repairing damaged joints through surgery. Wear-resistant artificial joints made of metal and plastic are available for all the major joints.

Source: Arthritis Foundation

How Much Did You Know ?

1. Which of the following is most likely to raise your blood cholesterol level?

Odd as it may sound, saturated fats are more likely to raise blood cholesterol levels than cholesterol in your diet. That's why shrimp or crabmeat (both of which are rich in cholesterol but low in fat) aren't as bad for your blood cholesterol level as the butter you dip them into.

2. Margarine, commercially baked foods (such as doughnuts), and any food cooked with hydrogenated vegetable oils are bad for the heart.

All these foods contain trans fatty acids. These fatty acids have been hydrogenated, a process that alters them on the molecular level to stay solid at room temperature, turning vegetable oils into "hard" margarines and cooking fats. A recent study, supported by the American Heart Association, which followed 80,000 women, found that those whose diets had the highest amounts of trans fatty acids had the highest risk for heart attack.

3. Ralph and John eat exactly the same breakfast every morning at The Dive Diner: two eggs, four slices of bacon, and a jelly doughnut for dessert. One day they decide it's time to change the routine. Ralph drops the bacon and eggs from his morning meal while John drops the doughnut. Whose cholesterol level is more likely to drop?

There is no way to know whose blood cholesterol level will drop, because so much depends on a

person's genetics. Not everyone's cholesterol level responds to dietary change. It's still worth making the effort, though, since you can't be sure if you're a high or low responder until you try.

4. Cholesterol is an essential substance needed for life. In its pure form, it is white, odorless, waxy, and is made by the

The organ that makes cholesterol is the liver. Although cholesterol is found in all foods of animal origin, if you never ate a single critter, your liver would still produce all the cholesterol you need.

5. We need cholesterol because it helps our bodies

Cholesterol is essential to cell membranes, but also helps manufacture hormones, bile acids, and vitamin D. Cholesterol is found in all animal cells, which is why it's found in foods of animal origin, like eggs and meat. Cholesterol is not found in vegetable foods.

6. In terms of blood cholesterol, which of the following is widely referred to as the "good" kind?

The correct answer is HDL, or high density lipoproteins. According to the National Cholesterol Education Program, HDLs greater than 60 help protect against heart disease. HDLs below 35 place you at risk of heart disease (even if your total cholesterol isn't elevated).

7. This next question centers on olive oil (monounsaturated), corn oil (polyunsaturated), and butter (saturated fats). Going in order from okay

for you to not so good for you, how are the three different types of fat rated? Okay & Not So Good

- a) corn oil, olive oil, butter b) olive oil, corn oil, butter c) corn oil, butter, olive oil d) butter, corn oil, olive oil

The correct answer is olive oil, corn oil, and then butter. Here's why: Monounsaturated fat, which is found in olive and canola oils, tend to lower LDL levels while leaving HDL levels the same. Polyunsaturated fat is found in corn or safflower oil and tends to reduce both the HDL and LDL levels. Saturated fat, in animal products and hardened vegetable oils, raises the blood levels of both HDL and LDL cholesterol.

8. The best way to increase that "good" cholesterol is

The best ways to increase HDL levels are quitting smoking, losing weight (if you're overweight), and exercising regularly.

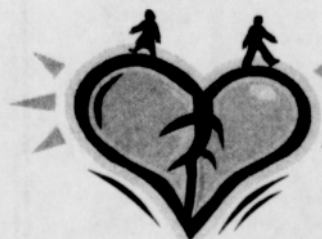
9. How often should you schedule a blood lipid profile (cholesterol, HDLs, LDLs, triglycerides)?

Doctors recommend that starting at age 20, people should get their blood lipid levels tested at least every five years. It's around that age that levels begin to rise in both men and women.

10. Of the following, which is NOT a way to reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease?

While watching television can be relaxing, it's not an effective way to keep your blood vessels clear. Try getting out and exercising instead.

Heart, Health and Hostility



Anger and hostility cause "fight-flight" biological stress and consequent coronary artery constriction, increasing blood pressure, blood thickening, and inhibiting digestion, sexuality, and healing. In addition, hostility causes a second type of stress reaction, "vigilant observation," where the body stays constantly on guard. Exactly how to define anger and hostility is complex and is still being researched in psychological testing and medical analysis.

Hostility and suppressed anger are immediately pernicious, driving up cholesterol, blood pressure and the chance of heart attack. Persistent anger and hostility appear to contribute to many chronic medical conditions such as hypertension, heart attack, stroke, angina, skin conditions, and cancer.

Chronic hostility, suppressed anger, arousal, and vigilance stresses organ systems, testing the weakest

link. In angry moments high blood pressure and arterial constriction can cause angina or a shortage of oxygen to the heart — heart attack — in people with existing heart conditions.

If there are fatty deposits in the arteries, possibly those which feed oxygen to the heart, a moment's anger may cause a small clot to break off and become clogged, resulting in heart attack. An angry moment may, instead, cause the heart rhythm to radically change, resulting in a similar myocardial ischemia.

Ischemic attacks may be silent and unnoticed, not causing pain like angina.

Hostility is an attitude of habitual emotional and behavioral response. Attitudes begin and persist from learning, experience, preference, aversion, scientific and spiritual views, superstition and prejudice. The hostile attitude is quickly aggressive, either behaviorally or verbally, and motivated by emotions of animosity and hatefulness.

An attitude of hostility is suspicious, spiteful, with intent to harm persons and objects. Cynicism, a dismal view of others, may combine with self-inflation, boasting and over-focus on one's possessions in one prone to hostility. Anger, similar to

resentment, is an emotional upset with physiological arousal on a scale from irritation to annoyance, anger and fury to rage.

Anger challenges us with a health choice — "alter it, avoid it or adapt to it." Anger expressed clearly and specifically can aid problem solution. Hostility continues to irritate, because it actually does damage to the parasympathetic nervous system that returns the body to healing restfulness. Some illogical and negative beliefs underlay angry feelings and hostile attitudes. Persons who learn to alter their reactions can reduce their vulnerability to heart disease. This involves learning to change emotional, behavioral, and perceptual responses to frustrating experiences. Changing angry feelings and hostile reactions involves changing one's view of humans and the universe — growing to see others as intrinsically valuable because they exist, and ceasing to see others and the world as basically predatory and untrustworthy.

Successful change, for many, may also involve increasing and strengthening one's social and familial ties, because lack of social support is often present in the lives of people who are often angry and hostile.

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