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cardiac care provided in a **heartbeat**

THE “WHYS” OF EXERCISE

A disgruntled cardiac patient complained that his cholesterol level had actually increased since he had joined our exercise program 6 months earlier. He was currently walking 2 miles a day, three days each week. Include to the increased cholesterol level was that his weight had increased 5 pounds.

Even if you exercise regularly, your cholesterol levels are likely to increase if you put on weight. Researchers reviewed 100 published studies of the effects of exercise on total cholesterol and bad-cholesterol (LDL). Results of such studies were categorized according to whether the exercise's gained, maintained, or lost weight. Those who exercised but gained weight increase their total and bad cholesterol levels. The people who exercise but whose weight remained unchanged lowered their total and bad cholesterol levels. Those who exercise and lost weight however much greater reductions had in total and bad cholesterol.

Research has generally found that people who exercise a great deal have higher good cholesterol (HDL) level than people the same age who do not exercise.

The Increased Results from Reduction in Weight and Body Fat.

The physical conditioning programs that have produced the highest increase in good cholesterol are usually the most rigorous, consisting of aerobic exercise 3 times a week.

A disgruntled patient is disgruntled no more. A new diet and continued exercise is shaping him up and slimming him down. He knows that, for best results, both weight



control and exercise are important for maintaining desirable cholesterol levels. The goal should be to lose weight and stored fat; reduce the calories, saturated fats, and cholesterol in your diet; and get started on a program of aerobic exercise.

Several reports in the Medical Press have suggested that strenuous physical exertion can cause a heart attack or sudden death in healthy patients. Although such deaths have occurred they are very rare. A few people may be prone to exercise related heart problem, but almost without exception, these few people have some form of undiagnosed heart disease. The vast majority of heart patients can exercise safely after a heart attack, coronary artery bypass surgery, or balloon angioplasty.

Heart problems during exercise often start with symptoms such as palpitations, chest discomfort or pressure, and dizziness. If you feel any of these warning signs, stop exercising and check with your doctors before you exercise again.

EXERCISE AND CHOLESTEROL

Until recently, little was known about how the body could react to the addition of an exercise regimen to a low fat diet. Now we have results from a study suggesting that sedentary, overweight men and women following the National Cholesterol Education Programs, low fat diet and “substantially and favorably improved” lipoprotein indicators when they added regular brisk walking or jogging to their routine. Lipoprotein indicators are blood measurements used by doctors in assessing a person’s risk of heart disease. They include total cholesterol, triglyceride and LDL cholesterol.



A COCKTAIL A DAY, TO KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY?

Recent data shows that having a drink or two daily can result in as much as 40% reduction of your risk for coronary disease. People in this study drank up to 30 grams of alcohol a day, equal to about 16 oz of beer, and 12 oz of wine or 2 oz of hard liquor. The study was carefully adjusted for fat, cholesterol and fiber intake. The investigators were also careful not to use as a reference group non-drinkers who abstained because of pre-existing disease, or heavy drinkers who deny how much alcohol they consume.

The researchers speculate that the way alcohol reduces coronary artery disease is by raising the level of HDL cholesterol, the type of cholesterol believed to protect against heart disease. What the study does not mention is the potential impact of a large number of people drinking up to 30 grams of alcohol per day. Would alcoholism increase? Would there be even more fatal auto accidents due to driving under the influence of alcohol? I think so. The social implication of this study is quite sobering.