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Know about high cholesterol in the blood

Hypercholesterolemia is the medical term for high cholesterol levels in the blood. It is caused due to the metabolic derangement that can be caused by many diseases besides a number of other factors. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in all cells of the body. Our body needs cholesterol to make hormones, vitamin D, and substances that help digest foods. The liver itself produces about 75% of the required cholesterol and the rest is to be taken from the foods we eat. As it does not mix with blood, it is carried in small packages called lipoproteins. There are two types of lipoproteins.: Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, known as bad cholesterol and High-density lipoprotein (HDL) also called good cholesterol.

Elevated cholesterol in the blood is due to abnormalities in the levels of lipoproteins,. LDL cholesterol causes a buildup of cholesterol in the arteries' walls called plaque while HDL cholesterol carries the cholesterol from other parts of the body to the liver which removes it. The plaque causes the arteries to narrow and make them harder which is called atherosclerosis. Narrowing of the coronary arteries which bring blood to the heart can stop or slow down the flow of blood to the heart. The amount of oxygen-rich blood is decreased. This is called coronary artery disease (CAD).

Causes of high cholesterol : The high cholesterol levels are due to a combination of environmental and genetic factors. Environmental factors include: obesity, wrong diets and sedentary life style including low physical activity while the family history may also contribute known as the genetic factor. A number of secondary causes responsible for higher cholesterol levels in the blood include : diabetes type 2, obesity, alcohol, dialysis, obstructive jaundice, hypothyroidism, smoking etc. besides medicines like thiazide diuretics, ciclosporin, glucocorticoids, retinoic acid and beta blockers.

Symptoms : Its symptoms are found late. Over a period of time, chronically elevated serum cholesterol contributes to formation of plaques in the arteries. This leads to progressive narrowing (stenosis) or even complete blockage (occlusion) of arteries. This further leads to the low blood supply to the tissues and organs and gradually diminishes

until organ function becomes impaired. Generally at this point the symptoms appear. For example, temporary ischemia of the brain may manifest as temporary loss of vision, dizziness and impairment of balance, difficulty speaking (aphasia), weakness (paresis) and tingling or numbness (paresthesia) usually on one side of the body. Insufficient blood supply to the heart may manifest as chest pain, calf pain etc.

Measuring Cholesterol Levels : Desirable blood cholesterol : Total blood cholesterol is less than 200 mg/dL; LDL is lower than 130 mg/dL; borderline high cholesterol : Total level is between 200 and 239 mg/dL or LDL is 130 to 159 mg/dL and high blood cholesterol : Total level is greater than 240 mg/dL or LDL is 160 mg/dL or higher. But this may vary from person to person, especially having certain medical conditions as well as in different countries and races.

Herbal therapies : Today the world is recognizing herbal remedies as safe alternative therapies for a variety of health conditions including high levels of cholesterol control. Guggul or Shuddh Guggul and Garcinia have proved very effective without side effects. There are simple ways also to keep cholesterol under check. Use of Garlic, Basil, Alfalfa, Terminalia Arjuna, Omega-3 fatty acids, Green teas, Cinnamon, almonds and walnuts, oats, 8 – 10 glasses of water daily, Onion Juice, Coriander seeds juice, whole grain and whole wheat cereals, veg oils, apples, oranges, lemons, guavas, papayas, water melons, pears, spinach, broccoli, eggplant, cabbage, cucumber, tomatoes, onions, beet root, carrots, and radish among others play an important role in checking high cholesterol levels. Use of olive oil as toppings on salads is good. Regular 30 to 60 minutes of brisk walk, swimming or biking helps besides yoga like Padmasna, Vajrasana, Shalabhasana, ardhhamatesyendrasana etc.

It is equally important that cheese, butter, processed milk items, sweets, trans fats in margarines, cookies, cakes, hydrogenated oil, whole milk, egg yolk, maida products, gravies, alcohol, spicy foods etc. are avoided or consumed in very moderate quantities once in a while.

Cholesterol control : Prevention is better than cure and cholesterol control is not difficult. A healthy life style should be adopted. Don't smoke or drink, maintain weight and regular exercise is important besides being stress free and happy.

To know more about high cholesterol levels, heart problems or any guidance for any disease, please contact Dr. Kumar dr.kumar@yorkcollege.com

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