

## Is the enemy within or without

Medicine is an art based on an inexact science, with the latter changing daily with new research and concepts. In the past, it was thought that a blood cholesterol over 200 is a strong promoter of cardiovascular disease. The cholesterol story is now being rewritten.

Cholesterol has been malaligned. It is actually an antioxidant and a healthy component of our blood.

Earlier this year, "The Archives of Internal Medicine" revealed that elderly folks with higher cholesterol lived longer and had a decreased incidence of life-threatening infections. When this issue was recently reviewed, there was only a slight increase of cardiovascular events in people that had high cholesterol. Cholesterol is



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the backbone and precursor of our hormones, all our cellular membranes and in particular, in 50 percent of our brain. To lower this healthy substance is doing us a disservice rather than a service. As noted before, there are good cholesterol components (the HDL's) and the not so good ones (LDL).

Actually it is the *oxidized* LDL and triglycerides which have been demonstrated to be detrimental to our health and not necessarily the total or even LDL cholesterol. Some experts feel that cholesterol levels less than 170 are detrimental to life. Other than cholesterol per se', there are risk factors such as homocysteine, blood sugar, HsCRP and blood pressure greater than 120, as well as several emerging ones (Lpa, IL-6 and antioxidant levels).

I recently came back from a scientific medical meeting on the east coast, where I learned that folks who had a relatively high cholesterol had a decreased incidence of chronic diseases such as arthritis, Alzheimer's and rare diseases like multiple sclerosis.

Much of our cardiovascular

health is based on our genetics, but this could be modified depending on our dietary intake. Humans should eat no or only meager amounts of carbohydrates, a fair amount of healthy protein (eggs, meat and fish) and importantly, the right mixture of fat. The trans-fats, such as in most prepared and fast foods are poison, the Omega 3's (fish oils) should be eaten moderately and the predominant fat should be that of Omega 6's (non-hydrogenated unsaturated vegetable oils). This includes the tropical oils (coconut oil) and nut oils like hemp, soybean, safflower, sunflower, flax and tree nuts, but not earth nuts -- peanuts. The 4:1 balance of Omega 6's to 3's are recommended in the new science and lipid and cholesterol control.

*(Editor's Note: Views and ideas of this column do not reflect on the ideas of The Coffeyville Journal.)*