



WEEK 3 –HEART HEALTH CHOLESTEROL

Greetings!

Welcome to Week 3 of the Dynamic Wellness Challenge™ Sneak Peek.

This week’s challenge is designed to help you understand the current knowledge about cholesterol and to give you some tips for keeping your cholesterol level in a healthy range. If your cholesterol level is already there, congratulations.

What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is an essential component of the membranes of all of our cells. We need cholesterol to survive! Most of the cholesterol that is found in our bodies is manufactured by our liver.

Cholesterol needs to be attached to protein to travel through our bloodstream. There are two compounds called lipoproteins – low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and high-density lipoproteins (HDL) – that do the transporting. LDL has come to be known as “bad” cholesterol because it carries cholesterol from the liver throughout the body, potentially allowing it to be deposited in our artery walls. LDL cholesterol is not generally harmful unless it is oxidized by free radicals. HDL is known as the “good” cholesterol because it works to remove the bad LDL cholesterol from our arteries.

Which Is More Important – LDL or HDL?

Some recent studies show that HDL cholesterol is possibly more important than LDL cholesterol in predicting heart disease risk. In people with heart disease, the most common cholesterol problem is too little HDL. We should do what we can to raise our HDL.

The Ratio is Key

One way to measure if our HDL is high enough is to calculate the ratio between our total cholesterol and our HDL. To calculate this ratio, divide your total cholesterol by your HDL level. For instance, if your total cholesterol is 175 and your HDL is 50, your ratio is 3.5. If your total cholesterol is 150 and your HDL is 50, your ratio is 3, which shows a lower risk for heart disease.

Most experts believe that a ratio below 3.5 is ideal. Of course, it’s also a good idea to do what you can to lower your LDL cholesterol so we will look at some ways to do both.

How to Improve Your Ratio

Some of the best natural ways to achieve a healthy total cholesterol/HDL ratio are:

► Exercise

Exercise is one of the most effective ways to raise HDL cholesterol. So staying active is important for cholesterol and overall heart health. Strength training and cardio exercise have both been shown to raise HDL.

► Diet

Diet has a big impact on cholesterol levels but maybe not in the way many of us think about cholesterol in our diet. It has now been well established that the cholesterol we eat (for instance, in eggs) has a relatively low impact on our blood cholesterol levels. That’s because our liver produces about 80% of the cholesterol in our bloodstream, regardless of how much cholesterol we consume from food.



See this week’s Game Plan for foods that can help you achieve healthy cholesterol levels.