

Health Awareness

Cholesterol Q & A With Mark Spitz And A Specialist Pharmacist

(NAPSA)—It may seem surprising to some, but cholesterol is needed for the body to function normally. However, too much cholesterol in the blood, or high blood cholesterol, can be serious, and people with high blood cholesterol have a greater chance of developing heart disease.

Although more than one-third of adults have been diagnosed with high blood cholesterol, there are no warning signs or symptoms, so many people aren't aware their cholesterol is too high until symptoms of heart disease develop. Checking cholesterol levels is done with simple blood tests, and there are various treatment options.



Steve Naeger,
R.Ph.

Consider the case of gold-medalist swimmer Mark Spitz. He was in prime shape, maintaining less than 2 percent body fat when he was diagnosed with high cholesterol.

Along with millions of other Americans, Spitz takes medication every day to keep his cholesterol in check. He also works with his doctor and a specialist pharmacist. Some pharmacists are now specializing in chronic health conditions. Spitz relies on cardiovascular pharmacists, like Steve Naeger, as an educational resource and to help him manage his medications. Naeger has advanced knowledge about cardiovascular conditions, including high cholesterol, and the medications used to treat them.

Through Medco Health Solutions, Inc., Mark and millions of



As fit as he is, Olympic swimmer Mark Spitz still needed the help of a specialist pharmacist to manage his cholesterol.

other Americans now have access to specialist pharmacists who concentrate on chronic conditions. Following is a conversation between Spitz and Naeger on how to effectively manage his cholesterol medication.

Spitz: I am very careful with the medications I take and I rely on Medco's cardiovascular pharmacists to help me understand how my prescriptions work alone but also when taken together. What is the most common issue you deal with as a cardiovascular pharmacist?

Naeger: Drug interactions are the most common issues I en-

counter. Medications used to lower cholesterol may interact with medications used to treat other chronic conditions like high blood pressure. It's my job to flag these issues for my patients when there is a safety issue and help ensure their medication regimens are safe.

Spitz: Many people have more than one chronic condition, thus are taking multiple medications. What advice do you have to lower the risks associated with this?

Naeger: Always keep an updated list of your current medications with you and give each of your health care professionals a copy. Communicate with all your doctors if there is any change in your medication regimen. Also, make sure you know the basic information about each of your medications (this information is included with your prescriptions) and call your doctor or pharmacist if you are experiencing any side effects.

Spitz: What are some of the other benefits of working with specialist pharmacists?

Naeger: Specialist pharmacists receive training based on nationally recognized guidelines and have expertise in the medications used to treat specific chronic conditions. In addition, when there is a safety issue, we review patient medication profiles, check the safety of medications with medical conditions, look for duplication of medications and look for other opportunities that can help improve patient outcomes as well as offer some possible lower-cost options. You can learn more at www.medcospecialists.com.