

HEART HEALTH

Test Your Cholesterol Knowledge

(NAPSA)—People are constantly bombarded with information about the cholesterol problem in the United States and how to approach it.

There's often so much news, it's easy to suffer from information overload. To help break through the clutter, Los Angeles-based registered dietitian and heart health expert Heidi Becker takes five popular claims and explains what's fact and what's just hype.

Cholesterol in our bodies only comes from the foods we eat.

False. This is a common misconception. Most people naturally produce adequate levels of cholesterol to meet their needs. Consumption of animal-based products such as eggs, cheese, butter and meats adds excess cholesterol to our bodies, which is why it's important to limit your intake of these foods.

Plant-based nutrients reduce cholesterol.

True. Nutrients called plant sterols and stanols inhibit absorption of both dietary cholesterol and cholesterol produced naturally in the body. In fact, the U.S. government recommends consumption of two grams per day of these nutrients as part of its Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) guidelines that help lower cholesterol naturally for those with borderline to high cholesterol. They are found in plants, nuts, corn and rice, but only in trace amounts—you'd have to consume around fifty five bananas in one day to consume the recommended two grams. An easier solution is a plant sterol and stanol supplement, such as Nature Made CholestOff.

All fiber helps manage cholesterol.

False. While all fiber has health benefits, not all fiber helps with cholesterol reduction. Viscous soluble fiber, found in foods such as oats, barley, psyl-



An excess of information can make it hard to tell what's the best way to reduce cholesterol.

lium and prunes, helps reduce cholesterol levels when eaten as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Insoluble fiber helps with regularity by pushing waste through the digestive tract. The American Heart Association recommends adults consume 25 to 30 grams of total fiber per day.

Any kind of exercise counts.

True. The goal for most people is at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days. This includes swimming, biking, walking and running. While that may sound like a lot, the benefits quickly outweigh the work, and any exercise is better than none at all. Regular exercise has been shown to help lower LDL cholesterol, raise HDL cholesterol and lower blood pressure.

Only large cholesterol reductions make a difference.

False. A small reduction in cholesterol levels can have a big impact for many. Studies show that lowering cholesterol just 10 percent can reduce one's risk of heart disease by 30 percent.

Becker encourages everyone to get their cholesterol screened and to consult their health care professional to develop a customized treatment program if needed. For more information on natural cholesterol reduction, visit www.NatureMade.com.