

## **C is for CHOLESTEROL**

Cholesterol deposits in the arteries lead to heart disease. People can control their cholesterol intake by cutting down on eggs, fatty meat, whole milk and such saturated fats as butter and bacon fat.

Sources of fibre such as apples, carrots, nuts, soya beans and oatmeal also decrease blood cholesterol. In addition, most experts recommend aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, cycling, swimming etc.) at least three times per week to reduce cholesterol levels.

It is important to have your cholesterol level checked at a pathology laboratory so that you can receive a reading of your HDL cholesterol (high density lipoprotein) level. HDL cholesterol is able to mop up excess LDL cholesterol (low density lipoprotein cholesterol) in the blood and bring it back to the liver for processing.

It is the LDL cholesterol that clogs up blood vessels and causes heart attacks and strokes.

Aerobic exercise and the correct diet can increase your HDL level.

In South Africa a prominent heart expert, Dr Harry Seftel, claims that you should "Drive for Five" when measuring your cholesterol level. A cholesterol score of five or lower is ideal.

A large percentage of people who suffer from coronary heart disease are unaware of the fact that they have a cholesterol problem.

Have your cholesterol level checked periodically.

Cholesterol is both consumed in the food we eat and manufactured by the liver. It is transported in the blood attached to low density lipoprotein - LDL.

In contrast high density lipoproteins (HDLs) transport cholesterol back to the liver. HDL also contains an enzyme which breaks cholesterol down so that it can be excreted.

So while the actual blood cholesterol levels are important, it is also important to know how much HDL + LDL is present.

The HDL to total cholesterol ratio is the most commonly used index of coronary artery disease. The higher the HDL : cholesterol ratio, the lower the cardiac risk.

Exercise does have a small effect on cholesterol levels, but this differs from person to person.

Since the liver manufactures the cholesterol it needs, if your intake is low, production will probably go up to meet the shortfall.

Runners are likely to have a lower level of triglycerides (blood fats) and high level of HDL cholesterol (the healthy cholesterol).

***Task:*** Get your cholesterol tested

	This year	Next year
HDL Score		
LDL Score		
General		

**C also stands for CAFFEINE**

When you get tired and your blood sugar level drops, you crave a cup of coffee or a cold drink that has caffeine in it.

Caffeine is a stimulant, which increases the production of epinephrine, a hormone which controls the release of glycogen from the liver. As a result the level of blood sugar rises and we have energy again. Too much caffeine may make you feel jittery and anxious.

Caffeine's brain-boosting qualities can be rather ambivalent. On the one hand, it works to keep you mentally alert by displacing the brain chemical adenosine, a natural sedative. A few hours later the brain will secrete more adenosine to combat the extra stimulation triggered by caffeine. This leaves you feeling more fatigued, so reach for more espresso, only to perpetuate the vicious cycle.

A cup of coffee takes up to six hours before it has passed through your system. You can imagine the effect if you have two or three cups of coffee or Dom Pedro's before going to sleep.

My suggestion is that you try to avoid any stimulating drinks up to four hours before retiring. These include coffee, normal tea, cold drinks and alcohol. Caffeine also prevents the absorption of some vitamins, which we so desperately need to combat stress.

**2:** How many cups of coffee or tea do you drink in a day?

