



September is Cholesterol Education Month.

Revised Cholesterol Testing

Recently, U.S. health officials revised guidelines for reducing heart disease and stroke. You may expect your health care provider to:

- ✓ Focus less on your cholesterol numbers, and address other risk factors such as age, family history and obesity.
- ✓ Discuss choosing a statin (a drug that lowers LDL cholesterol) to guard against heart attack and stroke if you're in a high-risk group (have had a heart attack or have type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or very high LDL cholesterol).
- ✓ Recommend you take a statin if you are middle aged and have an elevated risk of heart attack or stroke within 10 years.

For lowering cardiovascular risk, lifestyle remains primary. The new guidelines emphasize treating obesity, plus regular exercise and tobacco cessation.

"Laughter is an instant vacation." – Milton Berle

QuikQuiz™:

Understanding Stroke

True or False?

1. The number of U.S. patients treated for stroke in ERs is increasing.
 T F
2. People are preventing strokes by taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs.
 T F
3. Men have more strokes than women.
 T F
4. You have a higher chance of successful treatment for stroke if you get to a hospital promptly by ambulance than by any other means of travel.
 T F

>> Answers on other side.

Q: Gene testing necessary?



A: Your genes pass hereditary information from 1 generation to the next. Tests can check the genes for changes that may increase the risk for certain diseases. But it's only 1 piece of the puzzle, since diseases are caused by interactions between genes, lifestyle and the environment.

Most people don't need genetic tests. They may create worry and do more harm than good, especially if the results have little chance of helping the person.

Carefully consider the benefits and risks of the tests. Genetic tests can be useful for people with certain hereditary conditions. An example is testing for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes in a woman who has a mother and sister with breast cancer. – Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Steps to Smart Health Care

You can get the best possible medical care with some simple steps:

- 1 **Read your health care plan.** Use plan services such as an online patient portal, condition management and wellness information.
- 2 **Make sure you understand your medical conditions and treatment options.** Follow your health care provider's instructions fully, or you'll risk having to restart treatment or return to the clinic or hospital for more care. Studies show that when patients are engaged in their care, they have better health outcomes.
- 3 **Use preventive services offered by your health plan,** such as screenings for various cancers, type 2 diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure and vaccinations.
- 4 **Learn your clinic's procedure for after-hours service.** Some health plans include an on-call nurse line to help you decide what type of help you need. A walk-in facility or an urgent care clinic is a good option when you can't wait to see your provider, but you don't need emergency room (ER) care. Care at a walk-in clinic runs about a third of the cost of an ER visit.

To learn when to use the ER, *turn to the other side.* >>

Secrets of Whole Grains

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

With a little know-how, you can reap the health benefits of whole grains, which are packed with fiber, B-vitamins and antioxidants.

What makes a grain whole? A whole grain has all 3 parts: the fiber-rich bran, the vitamin-packed germ, and the starchy endosperm. When grains are refined (to make white flour or white rice, for example), the nutritious bran and germ are removed, which eliminates much of the nutritional value. That's why whole grains are a healthier option.

Try these whole grains:



Quinoa (keen-wah), **millet**, **buckwheat** and **amaranth** – They boil to perfection in just 15 to 25 minutes. You can also toast them into granola, or boil with milk to make a porridge-like hot cereal.

Steel-cut or rolled oats – Besides breakfast oatmeal, you can combine them with savory ingredients for a delicious lunch or dinner side dish.



Brown rice, **wheat berries** and **pot barley** – Hearty and chewy, these grains take about an hour to cook. They make a great base for flavorful pilafs, stuffing or mock-risotto.

Always look for whole-grain options. They provide a greater variety of nutrients – and more fiber, too.



September is Whole Grains Month.



Know when to use the ER.

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians, emergency care is needed for:

- > Broken bones and fractures
- > Chest pain
- > Choking
- > Head, eye or spine injury
- > Severe vomiting
- > Severe abdominal pain
- > Severe breathing trouble
- > Sudden dizziness or excruciating headache
- > Sudden injury due to motor vehicle crash, burns, deep wounds, etc.
- > Swallowing a poisonous substance
- > Unconsciousness
- > Uncontrolled bleeding

Don't use the ER because it's convenient – you may end up waiting a long time for care.

2 Common Fitness Questions

1 What's the best exercise for losing weight?

When you're active, your body uses more energy (calories). When you burn more calories than you consume, you lose weight. Start with moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as walking, 5 days a week. **Long-term goal:** Increase the duration of your workouts and add strength training.



2 What's a simple way to build strength?

Beyond maintaining muscle, strength training is vital for losing body fat as well as fighting disease and disability. Plan for 2 or 3 workouts a week. Select 1 or 2 exercises for each of the major muscle groups. Work both sides of the body evenly. Do each exercise 8 to 15 times (reps) in sets of 1 to 3. Use weights that are heavy but comfortable to use. Your last rep should be difficult, but not painful. Or try resistance band exercises. **To start:** Consider using a personal trainer.

Note: First get your provider's OK if you're unaccustomed to exercise.

QuikQuiz™: ANSWERS

>> Continued from other side.

- 1. False** – A new CDC report finds the rate of ER visits for stroke or mini-stroke (a temporary blockage of blood to the brain) decreased greatly from 2001 to 2011, suggesting stroke prevention methods are working.
- 2. True** – Other factors credited with the lower stroke rate: fewer smokers and better use of medications for high blood pressure.
- 3. False** – Women have about 55,000 more strokes than men each year, and women have about 60% of stroke deaths. African Americans are almost twice as likely as Caucasians to suffer stroke.
- 4. True** – Clot-busting drugs may only be effective when given soon after onset of stroke, often the difference between recovery and lifelong disability.

Call 911 immediately if you have or see someone having these warning signs of stroke: major weakness in arm, hand or leg; numbness on 1 side of the face or body; sudden severe headache, slurred speech or confusion, or problems with vision, severe dizziness or difficulty walking, or loss of consciousness.



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/15V9tools.

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