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The Cholesterol Story

Established risks for heart disease include: high cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and family history. Two other lab determinants are high cardiac C-reactive protein and homocysteine.

The good news is, except for family history, all of these risks can be changed by addressing out of control inflammation, toxicity and nutritional deficiency. The bad news is, all of us to some degree, lead "inflammatory" lives in a toxicity challenged world.

Heck, even overwhelming stress causes more inflammation in our bodies.

Research shows that the type of cholesterol our bodies make is affected by inflammation. I'm now ordering more specialized cholesterol blood work called a VAP test for my patients. Cardiac labs measure the total cholesterol, HDL, LDL and triglyceride levels and determines the size of these lipid particles. Knowing more specifically about the size, character and pattern of a person's cholesterol particles can point to whether they're likely to build plaque in their arteries, which is a primary cause for heart attack and stroke. Other important labs include cardio reactive protein (CRP), homocysteine, myeloperoxidase and LP-PLA2 which can affect risk.

Statin drugs like Lipitor, Zocor and Crestor can improve some aspects of lipid profiles, but many natural supplements have beneficial effects without the side effects of the statin drugs, which for women, includes diabetes and dementia...

No two patient's VAP tests are identical, so every person's plan for achieving better health is different, but some of the nutrients I often prescribe include omega 3 fish oils, tocotrienols, green tea and pantethine. Of course unless we improve on nutrition, exercise and stress management, taking supplements is just a drop in the bucket.