



WELL-BEING

Column

What is your heart telling you?

You may not be aware of it, but you should ask yourself: "Am I suffering from hypercholesterolemia, and is my heart at risk?"

The risk factors for cardiovascular diseases are high cholesterol combined with arterial hypertension, obesity, smoking, stress and a sedentary life style. In many cases, diabetes increases the prevalence of coronary heart disease, and can even lead to fatal complications.

Rest easy! Hypercholesterolemia is not a disease, but rather a condition resulting from elevated cholesterol levels in the blood. The body, or more precisely, the liver, produces cholesterol as needed, adjusting the level based on the amount of cholesterol in the diet. Although some people may have a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol, it has been observed that those with hypercholesterolemia tend to have poor dietary and lifestyle habits.

In most cases, high cholesterol does not produce symptoms. For this reason, doctors and health professionals will recommend corrective measures to patients who have experienced a cardiovascular or cerebrovascular event. Annual screening tests, therefore, are strongly advised for men over 40, and postmenopausal women.

How can you prevent cholesterol problems?

Prevention begins with healthy eating, physical activity and good life balance. Easier said than done, you say? With today's frantic pace of life, mealtimes are taking a back seat and, although we want to eat right, we are often constrained to choose fast foods, which are rich in saturated fats. Plus, we try to squeeze in time for physical activities but regularly find excuses to reschedule and put them off until next season, or next year, or... Life is too hectic!

Here are some tips for a healthier lifestyle that require very little time and effort:

- Prepare lunches (turkey, chicken and fish are foods low in saturated fat) and healthy snacks (walnuts, fat-free yogurt, fruits and raw vegetables sticks) for your busy days.
- Find time for at least 30 minutes of physical activity ideally 3 times a week. Have your kids join you. They will be more than happy to go out for a walk, a bike ride, or play ball with you!
- Don't forget: Always make time to review your priorities in order to achieve a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities. Replacing some activities with others, and adding rest and relaxation periods, can be a good investment for your heart, your body and your soul!

Conclusion

For more information on foods high in saturated fat, the benefits of physical activity or simply for general health information, visit the www.heartandstroke.qc.ca website, or consult a professional from your support services.