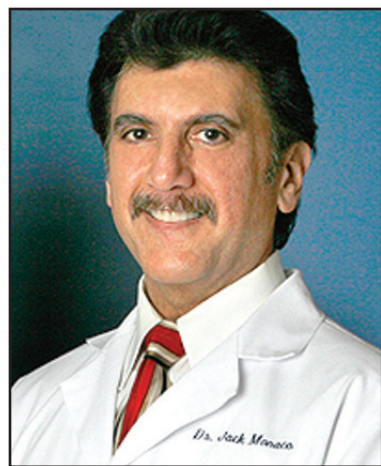




## HEART DISEASE, INFLAMMATION & THE CHOLESTEROL MYTH



**By: Dr. John B. Monaco**

Heart disease is the #1 killer of Americans. Yet, little is being done to correctly address and prevent this. Drug companies mislead the public by proclaiming that taking one pill a day may somehow miraculously prevent heart attacks and strokes simply by lowering LDL and total cholesterol. The problem is that there are at least **14** independent risk factors that cause arteries to narrow as we age. While drugs effectively lower both LDL and total cholesterol, they do so with significant side effects and without addressing the other causes of arterial narrowing and atherosclerosis (hardening and occlusion of arteries).

In addition to cholesterol and LDL, other risk factors for heart disease include:

- Low EPA/DHA (omega 3's)
- Excess triglycerides
- Elevated C-reactive protein
- Low free testosterone
- Excess insulin
- Excess fibrinogen
- Low HDL
- Excess homocysteine
- High blood sugar
- High blood pressure
- Nitric oxide deficit
- Low vitamin K

One of the things that is often overlooked when it comes to prevention is inflammation. While we need inflammation to protect us from infection and to help with the healing process after injury or surgery, inflammation is what causes the lining of the artery to allow the process of atherosclerosis and narrowing to begin.

Think of the lining of the artery like a tennis net. It has openings to allow for waste products to be carried away and nutrients, oxygen, etc to cross over to the space where the cells can be nourished. Think of the LDL (bad) cholesterol like tennis balls and golf balls. The tennis balls (large LDL) cannot pass through the net, but the golf balls (small, dense LDL) can. If the lining becomes inflamed, that is like cutting some of the net to enlarge the openings. Now more of the tennis balls can pass through the net to cause damage on the other side. Simply looking at cholesterol numbers ignores the importance of the size of the cholesterol particles (golf balls & tennis balls). The larger particles are less damaging, so you need to check for particle size to get a better picture of risk. Same with the HDL (good) cholesterol, larger particles are more protective than small ones.

So while cholesterol does not tell the entire picture, it is an important piece of the puzzle. Many studies have shown that keeping total cholesterol under 200 and

LDL under 100 significantly reduces risk. In high risk patients, the LDL needs to be even lower, under 76. Driving total cholesterol below 180 has been associated with an increased risk of suicidal behavior.

Reducing inflammation and blood sugar is another important aspect of prevention. A simple blood test for C-reactive protein (CRP) and Homocysteine, 2 markers of inflammation can be done to help identify risk of inflammatory diseases like heart disease and Alzheimer's. Checking fasting blood and insulin levels along with hemoglobin A1C (a measure of long term glucose control) should be done routinely.

Regular exercise has long been known to improve overall health, reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer and improve overall sense of wellbeing including naturally raising human growth hormone and other important hormone levels. In addition, regular weight bearing exercise keeps muscles strong, avoids many joint problems and helps to build strong bones.

The importance of diet cannot be over emphasized. A daily intake of whole grains, fruits and vegetables while reducing the amount of fat and red meat is crucial. Whole grains and vegetables provide, not only, cancer and heart disease fighting nutrients but tend to keep our cells alkaline (cancer cells cannot survive in an alkaline environment). So keeping red meats, processed foods, sugar, and desserts to a minimum can pay huge dividends. Avoid soda and fried foods at all costs.

In order to help to determine your risks, routine physical examinations with measurement of inflammatory markers (Homocysteine and C-reactive protein), blood sugar, insulin levels, Hemoglobin A1C and a complete cholesterol profile including particle size (VAP) should be done.

At the Monaco Center for Health and Healing, we perform a complete panel of blood and saliva testing to assess your risks for the common diseases of aging (diabetes, heart disease, etc.) Our main focus is to identify

your risks and address them before they become a problem. We focus on hormone balancing and nutritional supplements to address these risks. Our nutritionist, Maribeth Abrahms is an integral part of our team devoted to helping you regain and maintain your health. Call for an appointment today.

**Dr. Monaco is Board Certified in Anti-Aging and Functional Medicine. He is a Board Examiner for the American Academy of Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine. Listen to Dr. Monaco on the Mary Jones show on WDRC 1360AM on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 11:15AM. Come see Dr. Monaco on July 30th, 2008 at Angelico's in New Britain where he will be the featured speaker at Mary Jone's "Girls Night Out". Listen to WDRC 1360AM for details.**

**Dr. John B. Monaco Voted one of Connecticut's Top Doctors 2007! Monaco Center For Health & Healing, LLC., South Glastonbury, CT 860-657-3512 [www.monacocenter.net](http://www.monacocenter.net)**

## MONACO CENTER FOR HEALTH & HEALING LLC

**John B. Monaco, M.D.**

1015 Main Street  
South Glastonbury, Connecticut 06073  
Phone: 860-657-3512 x203  
Fax: 860-657-3516  
email: [drmonaco@monacocenter.net](mailto:drmonaco@monacocenter.net)

[monacocenter.net](http://monacocenter.net)