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Just In

Blood Cholesterol High? Check Your Bone Density

Postmenopausal women with elevated blood levels of "bad" low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol may want to watch out for thinning bones. According to research from the University of Milan, these women may be at increased risk for osteopenia, reduced bone density that precedes osteoporosis.

In the study, 1,303 postmenopausal women underwent bone density and blood lipid testing. Women with "bad" LDL's above 160 were much more likely to be osteopenic (48% vs 21%) than women with normal or low LDL's (below 130). Neither total nor "good" high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol was linked to osteopenia.

LDL's may alter bone metabolism so that normal everyday bone breakdown exceeds bone formation, the researchers suggest. These findings could explain why cholesterol-lowering drugs appear to improve bone density.

Obstetrics & Gynecology, November 2003.

EN's Annual A-to-Z Guide: Toxins, Disease-Fighters, Diets, Food News

It's been yet another year of nutrition developments, advances, surprises and recommendations. Over the course of a year, *EN* manages to touch on a wide variety of topics about nutrition and the environment to keep our readers informed. At year's end, we present you with this A-to-Z guide, highlighting what you need to know in a nutshell from the past year or so.

Acrylamide

Not even in our consciousness two years ago, acrylamide made waves when Swedish researchers found that this "probable carcinogen" was pervasive in our diets. It forms when high-

carb foods are cooked at high temperatures. That includes items like crisp crackers, French fries and potato chips. However, the most recent research has found no increased cancer risk in people eating foods high in acrylamide. That's reassuring, but the jury is still out. **Best advice?** Cut down on processed foods; eat more whole foods.

Blood Pressure Guidelines

Think your blood pressure is fine? Think again. New national guidelines reclassify many previously normal readings as "prehypertensive"—systolic readings between 120 and 140 and di-

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Nutrients, Remedies Rev Up Immune Defenses To Fend Off Colds, Flu And More

As another season of colds and flu gets underway, many of us are looking for ways to bolster our immune systems, a critical step to fighting off the estimated two to four cold viruses that will afflict most Americans this year, as well as more serious diseases.

A healthy immune system produces fighter cells, killer cells and scavenger cells that search and destroy foreign invaders—microorganisms. But this highly complex defense arsenal depends on an adequate and steady supply of nutrients. *EN* reports the latest research.

B Sure. B vitamins are vital to cell reproduction, including cells involved in the body's defenses. Even borderline deficiencies of vitamins B6, B12 and folic acid can wreak havoc with immune function. Older people are especially vulnerable, because they are more likely to be deficient in these particular vitamins. For insurance, take a multi.

C the Difference. Vitamin C is renowned for preventing colds, a reputation it

doesn't deserve; there's little solid evidence for that. But it is a critical component of a healthy immune defense. *EN* recommends getting at least 200 milligrams a day, by eating plenty of citrus plus other fruits and vegetables.

Get E-nough. Not getting enough vitamin E can also derail the immune system. Look to wheat germ and almonds as super sources. The amount of E for optimal immunity may be as high as 200-800 International Units (134-536 milligrams) daily—levels available only with supplements. Such amounts have been shown to restore age-related declines in immune function.

A-void Too Much. Some nutrients—notably vitamin A—can backfire and actually suppress immune function if you get too much. Vitamin A is essential for a healthy immune system, but too much of the retinol form of A is detrimental to immunity, bones and liver. Look for a multi that provides no more than 100%

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