

12 natural ways to protect your heart and lower your CRP

We spend a lot of time obsessing over cholesterol, but did you know that another blood test may be even more predictive of the risk of dying from a heart attack or stroke?

Hs-CRP, or high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (sometimes referred to as “Cardio-CRP”) is a protein found in the blood that is a sensitive measure of inflammation implicated in atherosclerosis. Chronic inflammation damages the arterial wall, creating plaque and increasing the risk of blockage and blood clots.

The American Heart Association and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have defined risk groups as follows:



- *Low risk: less than 1.0 mg/L*
- *Average risk: 1.0 to 3.0 mg/L*
- *High risk: above 3.0 mg/L*

High levels of hs-CRP have been invoked as yet another reason to take a statin drug, even if cholesterol is not high. That's because, in addition to lowering cholesterol, statin drugs act like “super-aspirin,” reducing inflammation. It's estimated that if we were to treat every American adult with an hs-CRP over 2.0, an additional 30-40 million Americans would be eligible for a statin. But instead of risking the side effects of statin drugs, there are many natural ways to get your hs-CRP under control. Here are some of them:

1) Eat an anti-inflammatory diet. A diet high in sugar and refined carbohydrates, and bereft of the beneficial polyphenols found in colorful fruits, vegetables and spices, is pro-inflammatory. Cut the carbs, and eat natural, organic, unprocessed foods. Minimize cheap, refined vegetable oils like cottonseed, safflower and corn oil (high in omega-6) and shun hydrogenated fats altogether. Anti-inflammatory foods include **most nuts**, avocados, garlic and onions, olive oil, fatty (but not fried) fish, berries and even red wine, coffee, tea and chocolate.

In a study of 3,920 people, subjects who ingested the most dietary fiber were found to have a 41 percent lower risk of elevated C-reactive protein levels, compared with those who ate the least fiber. The doctors who conducted this study concluded:

“Our findings indicate that fiber intake is independently associated with serum CRP concentration and support the recommendation of a diet with a high fiber content.”

The traditional Mediterranean diet exemplifies many of these characteristics and has been shown to lower CRP.

2) Exercise: Regular moderately intense exercise has been shown to lower hs-CRP. Exceptions are heavy power-lifting or ultra-endurance long-distance events, which transiently promote inflammation.

3) Lose weight: Your fat cells are depots of pro-inflammatory “cytokines.” Trim your waistline and your hs-CRP will decrease.

4) Quit smoking: Duh!

5) De-stress & sleep: Studies show that stressed individuals with poor sleep have

higher levels of hs-CRP.

6) Take a multivitamin: While it's unclear specifically which component of the multi was responsible for the effects, a 2003 study showed that, after six months, multivitamin users had reduced CRPs compared to placebo-takers.

7) Take magnesium: According to a large recent meta-analysis, blood levels of magnesium are inversely associated with CRP.

8) Take vitamin D: A recent study showed vitamin D combats inflammation in obese children.

9) Take vitamin C: 1,000 milligrams per day was found to reduce C-reactive protein as well as some statin drugs

10) Take a fish oil supplement: Six months of two daily 1,000 milligram softgels of EPA/DHA were found to significantly lower CRP.

11) Take curcumin: A potent extract of the curry spice turmeric, curcumin has proven effective in lowering a wide variety of inflammatory mediators in the body.

12) Take omega-7: A newly-discovered way to lower hs-CRP is via palmitoleic acid, a monounsaturated omega-7 oil found predominantly in macadamia nuts and full-fat (but not skim) dairy. In addition to fighting inflammation, omega-7 reduces bad cholesterol, raises the good HDL and helps combat insulin resistance. It's available as the new product "Mega 10" from Metagenics.

Hopefully, taking advantage of these tips will help you lower your hs-CRP, and in doing so, improve your cardiovascular health. Talk to your physician about getting a measurement of your hs-CRP reading at your next checkup, so you can take active steps to reduce it in a natural way, if need be.