

Doctor: High cholesterol not a reason to panic

By Kathryn Reed

Diet, exercise and body weight are critical factors when it comes to dealing with cholesterol.

David Young, a doctor with Barton cardiology, outlined the steps people can take to prevent getting high cholesterol as well as what to do when the numbers are above a good range.

“It is one of the most indolent diseases we have. It can start as a teenager and not manifest until five decades later,” Young told the more than 60 people gathered at Lake Tahoe Community College on Feb. 5.



Dr. David Young talks Feb. 5 about cholesterol. Photo/LTN

While fat is needed, there are various types of fats. Trans fats are the ones to avoid. As Young said, they are “inflammatory to the body” and should be avoided at all costs.

Too much cholesterol leads to narrowing of the arteries, and in turn heart attacks and strokes may be triggered. A plaque rupture can also occur. This is when cholesterol material spills into the bloodstream.

“It causes an acute heart attack and chopper trip to Reno,” Young said.

A blood test is how people find out if their cholesterol is normal or high. The HDL is what’s considered the good cholesterol. LDL is the bad cholesterol.

Results with less than ideal numbers are not something to panic about, Young said. Most of the time a change in diet and an increase in aerobic exercise can lower the numbers. Losing weight and stopping smoking are other ways to improve ones cholesterol.

Cholesterol issues are also hereditary. Thyroid and kidney issues can also impact cholesterol, as well as certain medications.

When it comes to medication statins is often the route Young chooses. He said there is a lot of misinformation about these types of drugs and often he has to battle with patients to convince them to take them.

“Statin is a drug that inhibits cholesterol in the body and acts in the liver,” Young said. “There are many different types of statins. Not all are equal. All have their own intensities.”

One that is often advertised on television is Lipitor. It’s considered a high intensity statin.

A criticism of statins is that they increase the chances of getting diabetes. Young said there is about a 1.09 percent chance of that occurring. What isn’t known is how statins and diabetes are linked.

“Some say it’s unmasking those who are predisposed to diabetes,” Young said.

A complaint of statin users is muscle pain. Young said between 2 and 11 percent of his patients on statins suffer from muscle

aches.

The American Heart Association has an online cardiovascular risk calculator.

“If you get 10 percent or above, that is when you have a conversation with your doctor about should I be on statins,” Young said. “Everything we do in medicine has risk and benefits. Keep the end goal in mind.”

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Notes:

- David Young will speak on the same topic Feb. 12 from 6-7pm at Sierra Nevada College, Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139, Incline Village. The lecture put on by Barton Health is free.