



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Control Your Cholesterol

Prevalence of Self-Reported Cholesterol Screening and High Blood Cholesterol Among Adults — United States, 2005-2009

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

High cholesterol is one of the leading causes of heart disease in the US. Unfortunately, many people aren't aware they have the condition until they have a heart attack or stroke.

Dr. Carma Ayala is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance regular cholesterol screening. Welcome to the show, Carma.

[Dr. Ayala] Thank you, Bob. Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Carma, what exactly is cholesterol?

[Dr. Ayala] Cholesterol is a fat-like waxy substance that is in our food and manufactured by our livers. Our bodies make all the cholesterol it needs to do important things, like make hormones and vitamins.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what makes cholesterol levels go up?

[Dr. Ayala] There are many things that cause high cholesterol, like family history of heart disease and stroke, which is the genetic component; eating unhealthy, high fat diets; being overweight; or not being physically active.

[Dr. Gaynes] What health problems are associated with high cholesterol?

[Dr. Ayala] High cholesterol in your body can cause a build-up in the walls of your arteries. Over time, this build-up causes decreasing blood flow and hardening of the arteries, which also known as arteriosclerosis. If the blood supply to the heart or brain is cut off by blockage, the result can be heart attack or stroke

[Dr. Gaynes] Carma, how does a person have their cholesterol level checked?

[Dr. Ayala] Bob, many people don't know they have high blood cholesterol until they have a heart attack or stroke, so it's important for them to get a blood check. Local pharmacies, many of them, have this blood check available or one can make an appointment with their health care provider to go. It's very important that people go at least once every five years to know if they have high cholesterol or not.

[Dr. Gaynes] How can people lower their cholesterol?

[Dr. Ayala] The first steps to control your cholesterol are making therapeutic lifestyle changes, such as managing a normal weight or losing weight if you're overweight, eating healthy low fat diets, and exercising regularly, which would be at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week. There are several types of drugs available that effectively lower cholesterol, if needed. Your health care provider will use these, together with the therapeutic lifestyle changes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about cholesterol?

[Dr. Ayala] Bob, they can go to www.cdc.gov/cholesterol.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Carma. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Carma Ayala about the importance getting your cholesterol screened regularly.

Remember, early detection and intervention, including eating a healthy diet low in fat and exercising regularly, can decrease the risks associated with high cholesterol. If you haven't had your cholesterol tested within the last five years, check with your local pharmacy or make an appointment with your health care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.