
Jefferson Cardiology Association Happenings

How Low To Reduce Cholesterol

In recent years, the recommendation from guidelines developed by the American Heart Association was to reduce LDL cholesterol, bad cholesterol, to levels of 70mg/dl in persons at high risk. High risk individuals included those with coronary disease, arterial disease and diabetes.

Confusing the issue was the recent appearance of new guidelines promoting the idea of treating persons shown to be at risk and not treating to a certain cholesterol target. Meanwhile, a study was presented at the recently concluded American Heart Association meeting showing evidence that reduction of cholesterol under 70 was beneficial and low cholesterol levels were not harmful.

Specifically, a drug called Zetia which reduces absorption of cholesterol from the intestine was combined with Zocor. Over the course of the study there was a small but statistically significantly reduction in cardiovascular events. A previous study showed no benefit of Zetia in reducing the thickness of lining of carotid arteries. Taking LDL cholesterol down to levels of 50 or less has not been shown to have any bad effects.

Even more promising is a research drug, PCSK9, which may reduce cholesterol by 50%. There is optimism that this agent when available may be able to significantly reduce heart attacks and strokes when combined with a statin.

Is Bridging Helpful or Harmful

Patients taking coumadin or other blood thinners may need to stop these agents prior to surgical or dental procedures. Often, to reduce the risk of stroke

or other blood clots, such patients may be given shots of short acting blood thinners for protection under these circumstances. This procedure has been called bridging.

Now a new study suggests bridging may be more harmful than helpful. A study of 7372 patients with atrial fibrillation were evaluated when anti-coagulation was interrupted for a procedure. Patients receiving bridging therapy had an increased rate of bleeding, stroke, blood clots to other body areas, hospitalizations and death within 30 days. Researchers suggest reevaluating bridging except for patients with mechanical heart valves or prior stroke.

Bleeding Risk Score

Scores have been developed to predict which atrial fibrillation patients need blood thinners to prevent blood clots. Specifically, the CHADS VASC score which is now accepted in the U.S. as well as Europe, identifies risk factors as age of 65 or above, arterial disease, past stroke, heart failure, hypertension and diabetes. Now there is a new risk score to identify persons at greater risk for bleeding from blood thinning medications.

These factors include age over 74 years, reduced kidney filtration, bleeding history, anemia and treatment with an antiplatelet agent such as aspirin or Plavix. This score can be used to assess the risk of prescribing coumadin or the new blood thinners for a patient with atrial fibrillation. The strongest predictor of bleeding risk was reduced kidney function and bleeding history.

We would like to extend a very Happy Birthday to our clinical manager, Brian Cooper, aka, Coumadin King!

We at JCA would like to wish everyone and their families a happy and safe holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Happy Holidays

Mocha Meringue Kisses

1/3 cup sifted powdered sugar
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon instant espresso coffee powder
3 egg whites
½ teaspoon vanilla
¼ cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup semisweet chocolate pieces
1 teaspoon shortening

Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper or foil; set aside. In a small bowl stir together powdered sugar, cocoa powder, cornstarch, and espresso powder; set aside.

In a medium bowl beat egg whites and vanilla with an electric mixer on high speed until foamy. Gradually add the granulated sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight). Gradually fold in the cocoa mixture.

Transfer the mixture to a pastry bag. Pipe twenty-four 2-inch kisses onto the prepared cookie sheet. (Or drop mixture by rounded teaspoons onto the prepared cookie sheet.) Bake in a 250 degrees oven for 1 hour. Cool on the cookie sheet. Remove from parchment paper.

In a small saucepan combine chocolate and shortening. Cook and stir over low heat until chocolate is melted. Drizzle the melted chocolate over cookies.

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