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ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER

Q: *I recently went to see my doctor and he ran a cholesterol check. As a result my doctor prescribed Lipitor for my high cholesterol. I know there is good and bad cholesterol, but could you please tell me more?*

A: Cholesterol is a type of fat that occurs naturally in foods and in your body. There are two main types of cholesterol. The “good” kind is called HDL. The “bad” kind is called LDL. When there is an excessive amount of LDL cholesterol, it can stick to the walls of blood vessels, making it harder for blood to move through them. The result of too much cholesterol sticking to your blood vessels is blocked arteries, which can cause a heart attack or stroke.

You should get your cholesterol checked every year. Talk with your doctor about what your cholesterol level should be. Typically, total cholesterol should be less than 200. LDL cholesterol should be kept below 100 and HDL cholesterol should be above 40 in men and above 50 in women.

Know and understand your cholesterol numbers and, if needed, work to keep them at a healthy level with the following tips.

- Eat a low saturated fat and low cholesterol diet
- Be physically active
- Lose weight, if needed
- Quit smoking, if you smoke

For more information, contact the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It's great to be great but it's greater to be human,"

— Will Rogers

Questions or
comments call
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WHY IS BUYING HEARING AIDS SO COMPLICATED?

There are 22 manufacturers of digital hearing aids and 40 different digital hearing aid models. No wonder buying hearing aids seems complicated. But, keep in mind all hearing aids have four basic parts: a microphone, an amplifier, a speaker and a battery. There are many models to consider, but all hearing aids control how sound is transferred from the environment to the inner ear. They are simply amplifying sounds so that you can hear the sounds better.

Hearing aids come with basic analog, programmable analog or digital technology. Basic analog amplifies all sounds equally. The audiologist sets the amplification level in the basic analog, though it can be adjusted later. The programmable analog allows the audiologist to amplify sounds differently. Soft sounds can be amplified more and loud sounds can be amplified less or not at all. Digital technology can analyze and adjust the sound based upon individual hearing loss and listening needs. This results in the sound being more finely tuned to personal hearing needs.

Buying a hearing aid may seem complicated, but keep it simple by choosing the model that helps you hear the best. See your doctor first to rule out correctable causes of hearing loss or underlying illnesses, and then have your hearing tested by a licensed audiologist. Ask questions and take the time to try various models. Research beforehand to understand the factors you should consider when buying hearing aids.

More information is available from the American Academy of Audiology at www.audiology.org, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at www.asha.org, National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders at www.nidcd.nih.gov, Hearing Aid Resource for Consumers at <http://earinfo.com> and Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov.

BENEFITS OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES

If you have a disability or an injury, you may benefit from assistive devices. Assistive devices are tools, products or equipment that help you perform tasks and activities. They may help you move around, see, communicate, eat or get dressed. Some are highly sophisticated like computers, while others are much simpler, such as a “reacher” that helps you grab objects out of your reach.

If you have difficulty performing a daily task, look for an assistive device that will make the task easier. Contact Active Forever at (800) 377-8033 or www.activeforever.com, Assistive Technology at (888) 640-1999 or www.enablemart.com and Aids for Arthritis at www.aidsforarthritis.com for more help.

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