



# Benefits News

Helping you take care of your employees, so they can take care

## September is National Cholesterol Education Month

September 2011

Dear ,

It's your friend, Barry Cohn at RGEB here.



Some people may look like the "picture of

### Who & Where We Are

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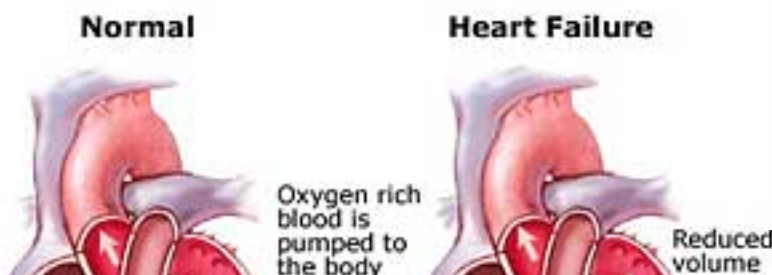
RGEB Insurance Agency

#0D60724

health” on the outside. But it’s what’s on the inside that matters the most. Like blood cholesterol. Do you know how to manage blood fats? Or what your HDL and LDL numbers mean? Knowing how these numbers stack up is important for overall wellness. Since September is **National Cholesterol Education Month**, the attached information may help you become more knowledgeable about your “picture of health.”

### About Heart Failure

Heart failure. It’s a scary term that simply means your heart isn’t doing its job efficiently. If you’ve been diagnosed with heart failure, your heart has trouble pumping the blood needed to carry oxygen and nutrients throughout your body. Approximately 5 million people in America are living with heart failure. Many of them are enjoying full and comfortable lives.




Find us on Facebook 

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To learn more about cholesterol, you can visit the [American Heart Association's website here.](#)

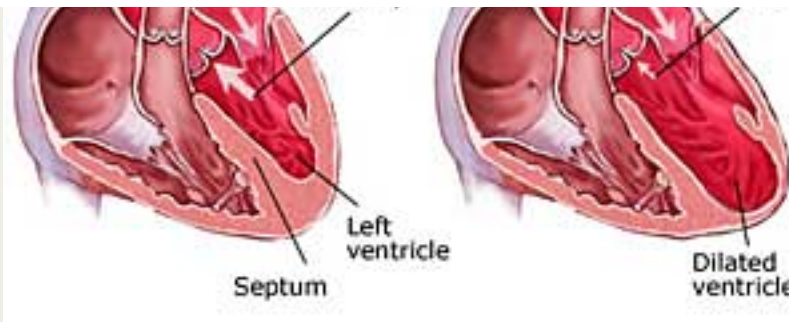
### Companies We Represent

Anthem   
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blue  of california



For a complete list, click [here](#) to go to our website

Common symptoms are:

- Shortness of breath with activity, or after lying down for a while
- Cough
- Swelling of feet and ankles
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Weight gain
- Irregular or rapid pulse
- Sensation of feeling the heart beat (palpitations)
- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue, weakness, faintness
- Loss of appetite, indigestion

Other symptoms may include:

- Decreased alertness or concentration
- Decreased urine production
- Nausea and vomiting
- Need to urinate at night

Infants may sweat during feeding (or other activity).

Be sure to get examined at the doctor if you feel like you have of these symptoms.

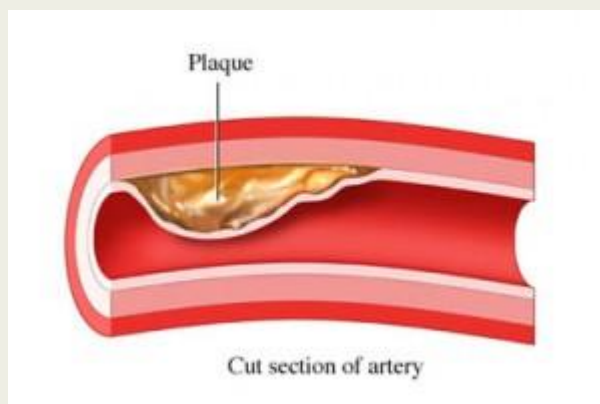
If you have heart failure, your doctor

Research has shown that you'll gain about two hours of life for each hour of regular exercise you do. Even moderate exercise like walking counts.

Don't panic if you've been diagnosed with high cholesterol. Use these tips and tricks to reduce your cholesterol and get back on track. Making the change to a healthful diet is the first step in lowering cholesterol. Most

If you have heart failure, your doctor will monitor you closely. You will have follow up appointments at least every 3 to 6 months and tests to check your heart function. For example, an ultrasound of your heart (echocardiogram) will be done once in awhile to see how well your heart pumps blood with each beat.

You will need to carefully monitor yourself and help manage your condition. One important way to do this is to track your weight on a daily basis. Weigh yourself at the same time each day and on the same scale, with little to no clothes on. There are diet changes, medicines, and even surgeries to help your body through this illness. *Read more about heart failure [here](#).*



**Tasty, functional foods help you lower cholesterol naturally.**

**Cholesterol. Most important: Limit the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet.**

**More ways to lower or maintain your cholesterol level [here](#).**



Do you want a diet to lower cholesterol? We all know that butter, ice cream, and fatty meats raise cholesterol, but do you know which foods make up a low-cholesterol diet? Find out here.

Here's some good news. To lower your cholesterol, you can actually eat more of certain foods. A handful of some "functional foods" have been shown to make a big impact on your cholesterol levels. They're also much tastier than a pill chased with a glass of water.

"These foods may not be magic, but they're close to it," says Ruth Frechman, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

Researchers have found that some foods -- such as fatty fish, walnuts, oatmeal, and oat bran, and foods fortified with plant sterols or stanols -- can help control your cholesterol. Some studies have shown that a diet combining these "superfoods" may work as well as some cholesterol-lowering medicines to reduce your "bad" LDL cholesterol levels.

How strong is the evidence? The FDA has reviewed the research on each of these foods, and given them the status of a "health claim" for managing cholesterol.



This is great news for the 105 million adults in the U.S. with high cholesterol. Making good food choices is an easy way of improving your health. It also puts less strain on your pocketbook. A trip to the grocery store is bound to be cheaper than a trip to the pharmacy. Also, many people can't handle the side effects from cholesterol drugs. Focusing on diet gives us all a new option.



## Getting Started on a Low-Cholesterol Diet



Managing high cholesterol isn't a simple do-it-yourself project. You need to work with your health care provider. And while changing your diet may help a lot, many people still need drugs to reduce their risk of heart disease.

Also, remember that these foods aren't

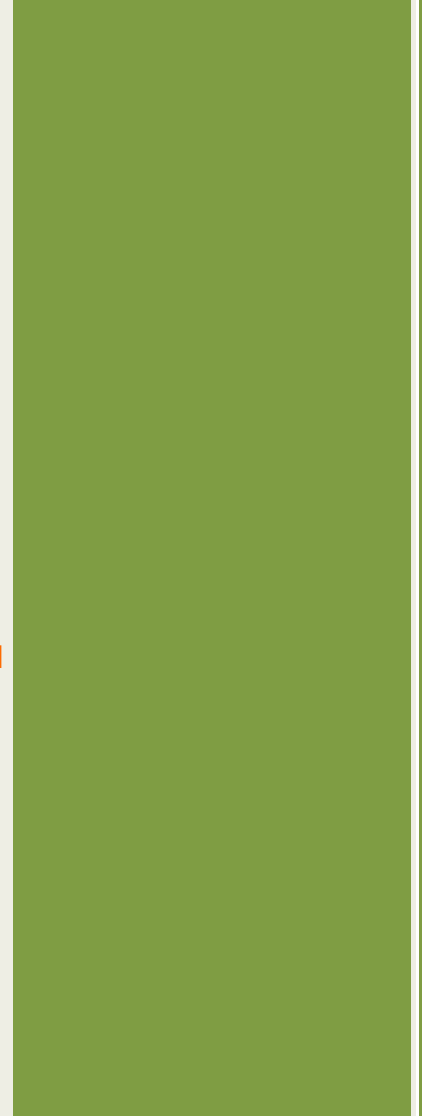


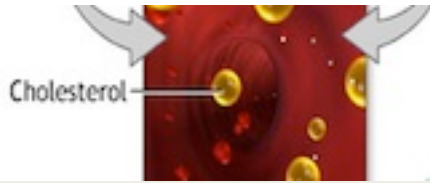
cure-alls. A handful of walnuts or a bowl of oatmeal won't make you invincible. It won't give you a free pass to eat all the high-fat foods you want. To benefit, you still must eat low-fat foods, watch your weight, and get more exercise.

"Eating a healthy diet is not just about eating a few special foods," says Suzanne Farrell, MS, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. "There's a bigger picture. You need to practice moderation, eat a variety of foods, and get enough physical activity."

## Vascular Health

Your heart has always been there for you – helping out with the decisions your mind wasn't equipped to make. So, isn't it time you started giving some of that love back? Your heart and vascular system need your undivided care and attention, and they need it now!





## The State of the Heart

America's hearts and vascular systems are in trouble. Heart disease and stroke, respectively, are the first and third leading causes of death in this country. Heart disease alone is responsible for approximately 29 percent of deaths in the U.S.

## As We Age

Your vascular system is your body's network of blood vessels, carrying blood to and from the heart – including arteries, capillaries and veins. Vascular disease primarily affects people aged 55 and older,<sup>4</sup> but vascular problems are very common for all ages and can be life-threatening.

## What happens as we get older?

Plaque and cholesterol build up in our arteries, thickening and stiffening them – narrowing the passage through which oxygenated blood can flow. This leads to restricted blood flow that can cause stroke, aneurysm, and loss of limb from circulation problems.



## Is my vascular health at risk?

Given the statistics, we all need to pay more attention to our vascular health. Below are some common risk factors to consider:

- Family history of vascular or heart diseases • Pregnancy • Illness or injury • Long periods of sitting or standing still
- Any condition, such as diabetes or high cholesterol, that affects the heart and blood vessels • Smoking • Obesity

If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor about what you can do to steer clear of vascular disease. You may have to make some minor – or major – changes to your lifestyle.



**Get Healthy. Stay Healthy. The Good News**

You have the power to improve your

vascular health and lower your risk of developing vascular disease. Here's how:

- Stop smoking. It's not easy, but you're worth the effort. Tobacco products deposit sticky plaque in our veins and arteries. They are the single most significant risk factor for vascular disease. Just remember that you don't have to quit alone. Reach out to friends, family, physicians and local support hotlines resources for guidance.<sup>5</sup>
- Eat a healthy, low-fat diet and maintain good cholesterol levels. Stock your fridge with fresh fruits and vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free milk and cheese. Control your portion sizes, and read food labels carefully when shopping to avoid foods with high levels of saturated fat and cholesterol.<sup>6</sup>
- Exercise regularly. Daily physical activity – even walking – can strengthen your heart muscle, lower your blood pressure, raise good cholesterol levels and lower bad ones, improve circulation, and increase your heart's working capacity.

With a little common sense and a lot of hard work, you can make a dramatic difference in your and your family's quality of life – like being there for the big moments.



## Common Types of Vascular Disease



The three most prevalent vascular diseases are:

- **Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD).** The peripheral arteries in the legs become too narrow, limiting blood flow to the legs. This can cause pain; difficulty walking; foot pain while resting, which can interfere with sleep; sores or infections that won't heal; and, in severe cases, limb loss.
- **Carotid Artery Disease (CAD).** The carotid arteries in the neck become thick with plaque, resulting in strokes due to the restriction of blood flow to the brain, or from clots and bits of plaque breaking off and flowing to the brain.
- **Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA).** This occurs when the aorta, the largest artery in the body, weakens and begins to bulge. This bulge is called an aneurysm. It may continue to enlarge and eventually rupture if left untreated.



eventually rupture if left untreated,  
causing severe internal bleeding and  
usually resulting in death.

Wishing you good health!

***Barry***  
***RGEB Employee***  
***Benefits***