

Health NEWS YOU CAN USE

High Cholesterol: Consumers Worried About Drug Safety

(NAPSA)—If you have high cholesterol, you have lots of company. Nearly 107 million American adults have high cholesterol—over 50 percent. Almost half of the consumers with high cholesterol also have hypertension and nearly 20 percent have diabetes. These consumers may be taking one or more different prescriptions for each separate condition. In fact, many adults over retirement age are taking five medications or more on a daily basis.

A recent nationwide survey conducted by Roper Starch, an internationally recognized market research firm, looked at adults with high cholesterol and their concerns about drug safety. Two-thirds of the consumers surveyed were concerned about the possibility that their cholesterol-lowering medication might have a negative interaction with the other drugs they are taking.

In addition, the survey found that more than 40 percent of adults have not discussed risks or side effects of their cholesterol-lowering therapies with their doctors, emphasizing the need for consumers to communicate with their doctors about the different prescriptions they take in order to avoid the possibility of drugs interacting with each other in the body. Not only do consumers need to



In a nationwide survey, two-thirds were concerned about their cholesterol-lowering medication having a negative interaction with the other drugs they were taking.

talk to their doctors about these side effects, but consumers also need to be educated about cholesterol. According to the survey, one-third of adults do not know their total cholesterol. What's more, more than half of the people surveyed do not believe an elevated LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, is a serious health risk. In fact, high LDL-cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for developing heart disease or having a heart attack.

Many doctors frequently pre-

scribe a statin to lower cholesterol. Statins are a group of powerful cholesterol-lowering agents and many of them require periodic liver monitoring. But there are other therapy options besides statins that can lower cholesterol, while at the same time reducing the risk of systemic side effects, especially involving the liver.

Nonsystemic medications are available that, unlike statins, are not absorbed by the body, and thus do not travel through the liver or kidneys. Bile Acid Sequestrants (BAS) are a class of nonsystemic cholesterol-lowering medicines. The number one prescribed branded BAS, WelChol (colesevelam HCl), is an effective and well-tolerated option for consumers with elevated LDL-cholesterol.

If physicians and consumers spent more time communicating concerns and increasing cholesterol education, potential negative side effects of a consumer's drug regimen may be avoided. Remember, there is a nonsystemic alternative available to the more standard cholesterol-lowering therapies that can help avoid systemic drug-drug interactions and alleviate consumer concerns about drug safety.

For additional important information about WelChol, visit www.welchol.com or call 1-877-4-SANKYO.

WelChol (colesevelam HCL) is a prescription drug that works with diet and exercise to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. WelChol is not for everyone, especially those with bowel blockage. Tell your doctor if you have trouble swallowing or severe stomach or intestinal problems. Side effects may include constipation, indigestion and gas. WelChol has not been shown to prevent heart disease or heart attacks. WelChol has not been studied in combination with all drugs; tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications.