

## Preview of the Medifocus Guidebook on: High Blood Cholesterol

Updated November 3, 2009



This document is only a SHORT PREVIEW of the **Medifocus Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol**. It is intended primarily to give you a general overview of the **format and structure** of the Guidebook as well as select pages from each major Guidebook section listed in the Table of Contents.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Background Information</b> .....	8
Introduction .....	8
About Your Medifocus Guidebook .....	10
Ordering Full-Text Articles .....	13
<b>The Intelligent Patient Overview</b> .....	15
<b>Guide to the Medical Literature</b> .....	31
Introduction .....	31
Recent Literature: What Your Doctor Reads .....	32
Review Articles .....	32
General Interest Articles .....	45
Drug Therapy Articles .....	53
Clinical Trials Articles .....	56
<b>Centers of Research</b> .....	75
United States .....	77
Other Countries .....	87
<b>Tips on Finding and Choosing a Doctor</b> .....	97
<b>Directory of Organizations</b> .....	103

# 1 - Background Information

## Introduction

Chronic or life-threatening illnesses can have a devastating impact on both the patient and the family. In today's new world of medicine, many consumers have come to realize that they are the ones who are primarily responsible for their own health care as well as for the health care of their loved ones.

When facing a chronic or life-threatening illness, you need to become an educated consumer in order to make an informed health care decision. Essentially that means finding out everything about the illness - the treatment options, the doctors, and the hospitals - so that you can become an educated health care consumer and make the tough decisions. In the past, consumers would go to a library and read everything available about a particular illness or medical condition. In today's world, many turn to the Internet for their medical information needs.

The first sites visited are usually the well known health "portals" or disease organizations and support groups which contain a general overview of the condition for the layperson. That's a good start but soon all of the basic information is exhausted and the need for more advanced information still exists. What are the latest "cutting-edge" treatment options? What are the results of the most up-to-date clinical trials? Who are the most notable experts? Where are the top-ranked medical institutions and hospitals?

The best source for authoritative medical information in the United States is the National Library of Medicine's medical database called PubMed®, that indexes citations and abstracts (brief summaries) of over 7 million articles from more than 3,800 medical journals published worldwide. PubMed® was developed for medical professionals and is the primary source utilized by health care providers for keeping up with the latest advances in clinical medicine.

A typical PubMed® search for a specific disease or condition, however, usually retrieves hundreds or even thousands of "hits" of journal article citations. That's an avalanche of information that needs to be evaluated and transformed into truly useful knowledge. What are the most relevant journal articles? Which ones apply to your specific situation? Which articles are considered to be the most authoritative - the ones your physician would rely on in making clinical decisions? This is where *Medifocus.com* provides an effective solution.

*Medifocus.com* has developed an extensive library of *MediFocus Guidebooks* covering a wide spectrum of chronic and life threatening diseases. Each *MediFocus Guidebook* is a

high quality, up- to-date digest of "professional-level" medical information consisting of the most relevant citations and abstracts of journal articles published in authoritative, trustworthy medical journals. This information represents the latest advances known to modern medicine for the treatment and management of the condition, including published results from clinical trials. Each *Guidebook* also includes a valuable index of leading authors and medical institutions as well as a directory of disease organizations and support groups. *MediFocus Guidebooks* are reviewed, revised and updated every 4-months to ensure that you receive the latest and most up-to-date information about the specific condition.

## About Your MediFocus Guidebook

### ***Introduction***

Your *MediFocus Guidebook* is a valuable resource that represents a comprehensive synthesis of the most up-to-date, advanced medical information published about the condition in well-respected, trustworthy medical journals. It is the same type of professional-level information used by physicians and other health-care professionals to keep abreast of the latest developments in biomedical research and clinical medicine. The *Guidebook* is intended for patients who have a need for more advanced, in-depth medical information than is generally available to consumers from a variety of other resources. The primary goal of a *MediFocus Guidebook* is to educate patients and their families about their treatment options so that they can make informed health-care decisions and become active participants in the medical decision making process.

The *Guidebook* production process involves a team of professionals with expertise in diverse areas including experienced medical database researchers and practicing physicians who serve as members of the *Medifocus.com* Medical Advisory Board (MAB). This team approach to the development and production of the *MediFocus Guidebooks* is designed to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and clinical relevance of the information. The *Guidebook* is intended to serve as a basis for more meaningful discussions between patients and their health-care providers in a joint effort to seek the most appropriate course of treatment for the disease.

### ***Guidebook Organization and Content***

#### **Section 1 - Background Information**

This section provides detailed information about the organization and content of the *Guidebook* including tips and suggestions for conducting additional research about the condition.

#### **Section 2 - The Intelligent Patient Overview**

This section of your *MediFocus Guidebook* represents a detailed overview of the disease or condition specifically written from the patient's perspective. It is designed to satisfy the basic informational needs of consumers and their families who are confronted with the illness and are facing difficult choices. Important aspects which are addressed in "The Intelligent Patient" section include:

- The etiology or cause of the disease
- Signs and symptoms
- How the condition is diagnosed
- The current standard of care for the disease

- Treatment options
- New developments
- Important questions to ask your health care provider

### **Section 3 - Guide to the Medical Literature**

This is a roadmap to important and up-to-date medical literature published about the condition from authoritative, trustworthy medical journals. This is the same information that is used by physicians and researchers to keep up with the latest developments and breakthroughs in clinical medicine and biomedical research. A broad spectrum of articles is included in each *MediFocus Guidebook* to provide information about standard treatments, treatment options, new clinical developments, and advances in research. To facilitate your review and analysis of this information, the articles are grouped by specific categories. A typical *MediFocus Guidebook* usually contains one or more of the following article groupings:

- *Review Articles*: Articles included in this category are broad in scope and are intended to provide the reader with a detailed overview of the condition including such important aspects as its cause, diagnosis, treatment, and new advances.
- *General Interest Articles*: These articles are broad in scope and contain supplementary information about the condition that may be of interest to select groups of patients.
- *Drug Therapy*: Articles that provide information about the effectiveness of specific drugs or other biological agents for the treatment of the condition.
- *Surgical Therapy*: Articles that provide information about specific surgical treatments for the condition.
- *Clinical Trials*: Articles in this category summarize studies which compare the safety and efficacy of a new, experimental treatment modality to currently available standard treatments for the condition. In many cases, clinical trials represent the latest advances in the field and may be considered as being on the "cutting edge" of medicine. Some of these experimental treatments may have already been incorporated into clinical practice.

The following information is provided for each of the articles referenced in this section of your *MediFocus Guidebook*:

- Article title
- Author Name(s)
- Institution where the study was done

- Journal reference (Volume, page numbers, year of publication)
- Link to Abstract (brief summary of the actual article)

*Linking to Abstracts:* Most of the medical journal articles referenced in this section of your *MediFocus Guidebook* include an abstract (brief summary of the actual article) that can be accessed online via the National Library of Medicine's PubMed® database. You can easily access the individual abstracts online via PubMed® from the "electronic" format of your *MediFocus Guidebook* by clicking on the corresponding URL address that is provided for each cited article. If you purchased a printed copy of a *MediFocus Guidebook*, you can still access the article abstracts online by entering the individual URL address for a particular article into your web browser.

## **Section 4 - Centers of Research**

We've compiled a unique directory of doctors, researchers, medical centers, and research institutions with specialized research interest, and in many cases, clinical expertise in the management of the specific medical condition. The "Centers of Research" directory is a valuable resource for quickly identifying and locating leading medical authorities and medical institutions within the United States and other countries that are considered to be at the forefront in clinical research and treatment of the condition.

Inclusion of the names of specific doctors, researchers, hospitals, medical centers, or research institutions in this *Guidebook* does not imply endorsement by Medifocus.com, Inc. or any of its affiliates. Consumers are encouraged to conduct additional research to identify health-care professionals, hospitals, and medical institutions with expertise in providing specific medical advice, guidance, and treatment for this condition.

## **Section 5 - Tips on Finding and Choosing a Doctor**

One of the most important decisions confronting patients who have been diagnosed with a serious medical condition is finding and choosing a qualified physician who will deliver high-level, quality medical care in accordance with currently accepted guidelines and standards of care. Finding the "best" doctor to manage your condition, however, can be a frustrating and time-consuming experience unless you know what you are looking for and how to go about finding it. This section of your *Guidebook* offers important tips for how to find physicians as well as suggestions for how to make informed choices about choosing a doctor who is right for you.

## **Section 6 - Directory of Organizations**

This section of your *Guidebook* is a directory of select disease organizations and support groups that are in the business of helping patients and their families by providing access to information, resources, and services. Many of these organizations can answer your questions, enable you to network with other patients, and help you find a doctor in your geographical area who specializes in managing your condition.

## 2 - The Intelligent Patient Overview

# HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

### Introduction to High Blood Cholesterol

*Cholesterol* is a fat-like substance that is an integral structural component of the cell membrane and also plays an important role in the production of some of the body's hormones. Without cholesterol, the body would not be able to function properly and, under normal circumstances, the body produces all of the cholesterol that it needs. *Hypercholesterolemia*, the medical term that is used to describe higher than normal levels of cholesterol in the bloodstream, is usually caused by the intake of extra cholesterol from the diet. Over the years, high levels of cholesterol and other fatty substances in the bloodstream (lipids) can lead to the accumulation of fatty deposits in the walls of the arteries known as *plaques* that can lead to cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack, stroke, and peripheral arterial disease.

### ***Types of Cholesterol***

In general, there are two types of cholesterol:

- Low-density lipoprotein (LDL):
  - carries most of the cholesterol in the bloodstream
  - commonly called "bad" cholesterol because too much LDL in the bloodstream can cause blocked arteries and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke
- High-density lipoprotein (HDL):
  - commonly called "good" cholesterol
  - HDL helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream and, thereby, prevents plaque accumulation in the arteries

Another type of fat (lipid) produced by the body and also found in certain foods is known as *triglycerides*. High levels of triglycerides in the bloodstream also increase a person's risk for developing coronary artery disease (CAD). To reduce the risk of developing CAD, it is important for people to maintain optimal blood levels of both cholesterol and triglycerides. This can usually be accomplished by a variety of lifestyle strategies such as:

- Maintaining optimal weight
- Minimizing dietary intake of foods that are rich in cholesterol and fats
- Avoidance of smoking

- Getting regular exercise
- Cholesterol-lowering medications (if necessary)

## **High Cholesterol and Risk of Coronary Artery Disease**

High levels of cholesterol in the bloodstream is recognized as a major risk factor for the development of *atherosclerosis* (accumulation of plaque in the walls of the arteries that can cause blockages and reduce blood flow to an organ) and is, therefore, also a key risk factor for coronary artery disease (CAD). In the United States, CAD is responsible for about 500,000 deaths each year. The American Heart Association estimates that about 100 million Americans have total cholesterol levels between 200-239 mg/dL (defined as "borderline high") and at least 40 million Americans have total cholesterol levels greater than 240 mg/dL (defined as "high"). These findings indicate that, based on levels of total cholesterol, at least 140 million people in the U.S. are at moderate to high risk for developing CAD.

Other important risk factors for coronary artery disease include:

- Age - 45 years of age or older (men) ; 55 years of age or older (women)
- Being overweight
- Not getting enough exercise
- Cigarette smoking
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure - 140/90 or higher
- Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL)
- Family history of heart disease
- Family history of elevated total cholesterol (greater than 200 mg/dL)

### **Metabolic Syndrome**

Women with a condition known as *metabolic syndrome* are at increased risk for developing coronary artery disease (CAD), irrespective of their LDL cholesterol level. Metabolic syndrome is most often seen in women who are overweight/obese who lead a sedentary lifestyle. Women are diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if they meet 3 or more of the following criteria:

- Waist measurement of more than 35 inches
- Triglyceride level of 150 mg/dL or higher
- HDL cholesterol level less than 50 mg/dL
- Blood pressure of 130/85 or higher
- Blood sugar level of 110 or higher

## **What Causes High Blood Cholesterol?**

Cholesterol is produced by the liver and is carried throughout the circulation by attaching to proteins. The cholesterol-protein combination "packages" are known as *lipoproteins*. There are two major types of lipoproteins:

- Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) - Also known as "bad" cholesterol, LDL is the major

lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the bloodstream. Too much LDL in the bloodstream is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke).

- High-density lipoprotein (HDL) - Also known as "good" cholesterol, HDL is the body's major mechanism for removing excess cholesterol from the bloodstream. HDL carries the excess cholesterol in the bloodstream back to the liver where it is broken down and then eliminated from the body.

In general, the causes of high blood cholesterol or *hypercholesterolemia*, can be grouped into two major categories:

- Lifestyle factors
- Genetic factors

### **Lifestyle Factors**

Lifestyle factors that can contribute to high blood cholesterol include:

- Obesity
- Lack of physical activity and exercise
- Consuming an unhealthy diet that contains excessive cholesterol

### **Genetic Factors**

People with an inherited condition known as *familial hypercholesterolemia* (FH), which results from a defective gene that produces the LDL-receptor protein, are genetically predisposed to very high levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol. The LDL-receptor protein plays a major role in regulating LDL cholesterol concentrations in the body. A defect in the gene that controls the production of the LDL-receptor protein can lead to defective clearance of LDL cholesterol from the body resulting in the accumulation of high LDL levels in the bloodstream.

There are two major types of familial hypercholesterolemia:

- *Heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia*
  - only one defective gene that codes for the production of the LDL-receptor protein is inherited from one of the parents
  - this condition occurs in about 1 of 500 people
  - in people with this condition, LDL cholesterol levels are about two times higher than normal
- *Homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia*
  - two defective genes that code for the production of the LDL-receptor protein are inherited (one from each parent)
  - this condition is very rare and occurs in about 1 in a million people
  - this condition results in extremely high blood cholesterol levels with rapidly progressive *atherosclerosis* ("hardening" of the arteries)

## Other Possible Causes of High Blood Cholesterol

Researchers have identified other factors that may contribute to high blood cholesterol in some people. These factors include:

- Increased sensitivity to dietary fatty acids - some people may be uniquely sensitive to saturated fatty acids resulting in abnormally high LDL cholesterol levels in the bloodstream.
- Menopause - the natural decline of estrogen levels that occurs in menopause may be a contributing factor to the increased LDL cholesterol levels that are usually observed in postmenopausal women.
- Hypothyroidism - people with hyperthyroidism (underactive thyroid gland) usually have higher LDL cholesterol levels in the bloodstream possibly due to the decreased production of the thyroid hormone *thyroxine*.
- Mental stress - people who experience periods of mental stress usually also tend to have higher levels of LDL cholesterol in the bloodstream due to increased secretion of adrenal gland hormones (corticosteroids and catecholamines) in response to the mental stress.
- Increased production of LDL by the liver - some people may develop high blood cholesterol levels if the liver produces too much LDL cholesterol and overwhelms the body's capacity to remove the excess LDL.

The **Intelligent Patient Overview** in the complete **Medifocus Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol** also includes the following additional sections:

- **Diagnosis of High Blood Cholesterol**
- **Treatment Options for High Blood Cholesterol**
- **Herbal Products for High Blood Cholesterol**
- **Questions to ask Your Doctor about High Blood Cholesterol**

To Order the Complete **Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol** [Click Here](#)  
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## 3 - Guide to the Medical Literature

### Introduction

This section of your *MediFocus Guidebook* is a comprehensive bibliography of important recent medical literature published about the condition from authoritative, trustworthy medical journals. This is the same information that is used by physicians and researchers to keep up with the latest advances in clinical medicine and biomedical research. A broad spectrum of articles is included in each *MediFocus Guidebook* to provide information about standard treatments, treatment options, new developments, and advances in research.

To facilitate your review and analysis of this information, the articles in this *MediFocus Guidebook* are grouped in the following categories:

- Review Articles - 45 Articles
- General Interest Articles - 24 Articles
- Drug Therapy Articles - 11 Articles
- Clinical Trials Articles - 57 Articles

The following information is provided for each of the articles referenced in this section of your *MediFocus Guidebook*:

- Title of the article
- Name of the authors
- Institution where the study was done
- Journal reference (Volume, page numbers, year of publication)
- Link to Abstract (brief summary of the actual article)

**Linking to Abstracts:** Most of the medical journal articles referenced in this section of your *MediFocus Guidebook* include an abstract (brief summary of the actual article) that can be accessed online via the National Library of Medicine's PubMed® database. You can easily access the individual abstracts online via PubMed® from the "electronic" format of your *MediFocus Guidebook* by clicking on the URI that is provided for each cited article. If you purchased a printed copy of the *MediFocus Guidebook*, you can still access the abstracts online by entering the individual URI for a particular abstract into your computer's web browser.

## Recent Literature: What Your Doctor Reads

Database: PubMed <September 2007 to November 2009>

### Review Articles

1.

#### **Pleiotropic effects of statins--clinical evidence.**

**Authors:** Athyros VG; Kakafika AI; Tziomalos K; Karagiannis A; Mikhailidis DP  
**Institution:** Second Propedeutic Department of Internal Medicine, Medical School, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, HippocratonHospital, Thessaloniki, Greece. athyros@med.auth.gr  
**Journal:** Curr Pharm Des. 2009;15(5):479-89.  
**Abstract Link:** <http://www.medifocus.com/abstracts.php?gid=CR008&ID=19199976>

2.

#### **Colesevelam hydrochloride: usefulness of a specifically engineered bile acid sequestrant for lowering LDL-cholesterol.**

**Authors:** Corsini A; Windler E; Farnier M  
**Institution:** Department of Pharmacological Sciences, University of Milan, Milan, Italy. alberto.corsini@unimi.it  
**Journal:** Eur J Cardiovasc Prev Rehabil. 2009 Feb;16(1):1-9.  
**Abstract Link:** <http://www.medifocus.com/abstracts.php?gid=CR008&ID=19237992>

3.

#### **Novel nonstatin strategies to lower low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.**

**Author:** Davidson MH  
**Institution:** Radiant Research, 515 North State Street, Suite 2700, Chicago, IL 60654, USA. michael davidson@radiantresearch.com  
**Journal:** Curr Atheroscler Rep. 2009 Jan;11(1):67-70.  
**Abstract Link:** <http://www.medifocus.com/abstracts.php?gid=CR008&ID=19080731>

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## 4 - Centers of Research

This section of your *MediFocus Guidebook* is a unique directory of doctors, researchers, medical centers, and research institutions with specialized research interest, and in many cases, clinical expertise in the management of this specific medical condition. The *Centers of Research* directory is a valuable resource for quickly identifying and locating leading medical authorities and medical institutions within the United States and other countries that are considered to be at the forefront in clinical research and treatment of this disorder.

Use the *Centers of Research* directory to contact, consult, or network with leading experts in the field and to locate a hospital or medical center that can help you.

The following information is provided in the *Centers of Research* directory:

- **Geographic Location**

- United States: the information is divided by individual states listed in alphabetical order. Not all states may be included.
- Other Countries: information is presented for select countries worldwide listed in alphabetical order. Not all countries may be included.

- **Names of Authors**

- Select names of individual authors (doctors, researchers, or other health-care professionals) with specialized research interest, and in many cases, clinical expertise in the management of this specific medical condition, who have recently published articles in leading medical journals about the condition.
- E-mail addresses for individual authors, if listed on their specific publications, is also provided.

- **Institutional Affiliations**

- Next to each individual author's name is their **institutional affiliation** (hospital, medical center, or research institution) where the study was conducted as listed in their publication(s).
- In many cases, information about the specific **department** within the medical institution where the individual author was located at the time the study was conducted is also provided.

## Centers of Research

### United States

#### CA - California

<u>Name of Author</u>	<u>Institutional Affiliation</u>
Garcia RA	University of California, San Diego, Department of Medicine, 9500 Gilman Dr, 0613J, BSB 2004, La Jolla, CA 92093, USA. r5garcia@ucsd.edu
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#### CT - Connecticut

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Coleman CI	University of Connecticut, Hartford Hospital Evidence-Based Practice Center, Hartford, CT 06102-5037, USA.

The **Centers of Research** in the complete **Medifocus Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol** includes the following sections:

- Centers of Research for relevant states in the United States
- Centers of Research listed for relevant countries outside the United States

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# 5 - Tips on Finding and Choosing a Doctor

## Introduction

One of the most important decisions confronting patients who have been diagnosed with a serious medical condition is finding and choosing a qualified physician who will deliver a high level and quality of medical care in accordance with currently accepted guidelines and standards of care. Finding the "best" doctor to manage your condition, however, can be a frustrating and time-consuming experience unless you know what you are looking for and how to go about finding it.

The process of finding and choosing a physician to manage your specific illness or condition is, in some respects, analogous to the process of making a decision about whether or not to invest in a particular stock or mutual fund. After all, you wouldn't invest your hard earned money in a stock or mutual fund without first doing exhaustive research about the stock or fund's past performance, current financial status, and projected future earnings. More than likely you would spend a considerable amount of time and energy doing your own research and consulting with your stock broker before making an informed decision about investing. The same general principle applies to the process of finding and choosing a physician. Although the process requires a considerable investment in terms of both time and energy, the potential payoff can be well worth it--after all, what can be more important than your health and well-being?

This section of your Guidebook offers important tips for how to find physicians as well as suggestions for how to make informed choices about choosing a doctor who is right for you.

## Tips for Finding Physicians

Finding a highly qualified, competent, and compassionate physician to manage your specific illness or condition takes a lot of hard work and energy but is an investment that is well-worth the effort. It is important to keep in mind that you are not looking for just any general physician but rather for a physician who has expertise in the treatment and management of your specific illness or condition. Here are some suggestions for where you can turn to identify and locate physicians who specialize in managing your disorder:

- **Your Doctor** - Your family physician (family medicine or internal medicine specialist) is a good starting point for finding a physician who specializes in your illness. Chances are that your doctor already knows several specialists in your geographic area who specialize in your illness and can recommend several names to you. Your doctor can also provide you with information about their qualifications, training, and hospital affiliations.

The **Tips on Finding and Choosing a Doctor** in the complete **Medifocus Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol** includes additional information that will assist you in locating a highly qualified and competent physician to manage your specific illness.

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## 6 - Directory of Organizations

### **American College of Cardiology**

2400 N Street NW, Washington DC, 20037  
(202) 375-6000

[resource@acc.org](mailto:resource@acc.org)

[www.acc.org/](http://www.acc.org/)

### **American Diabetes Association**

1701 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311  
1-800-342-2383

[AskADA@diabetes.org](mailto:AskADA@diabetes.org)

[www.diabetes.org/home.jsp](http://www.diabetes.org/home.jsp)

### **American Heart Association**

7272 Greenville Avenue Dallas, TX 75231  
800.242.8721

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

### **American Obesity Association**

1250 24th Street NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20037  
202.776.7711

[www.obesity.org](http://www.obesity.org)

### **Cardiovascular Research Foundation**

55 East 59th Street 6th Floor New York, NY 10022  
212.851.9300

[hhw@crf.org](mailto:hhw@crf.org)

[www.crf.org](http://www.crf.org)

### **MEDPED (Make Early Diagnosis to Prevent Early Death)**

University of Utah School of Medicine 420 Chipeta Way Room 1160 Salt Lake City, UT 84108  
[paul.hopkins@utah.edu](mailto:paul.hopkins@utah.edu)

[www.medped.org](http://www.medped.org)

The **Directory of Organizations** in the complete **Medifocus Guidebook on High Blood Cholesterol** includes a list of selected disease organizations and support groups that are helping people diagnosed with High Blood Cholesterol.

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