



Dr. Aieta,
I am a 60-year-old man and consider myself to be in very good shape for my age. At my recent physical with my primary care doctor, he found my cholesterol levels were a little high. He wanted to prescribe a "statin" to help lower it below 200. He said that by lowering my cholesterol, it would reduce my risk of a heart attack. What are your views on these drugs, and do they help people live longer?

TO STATIN, OR NOT TO STATIN

Staying Healthy with Dr. Aieta, N.D.

Instead of giving my personal views on statins, let's quickly review some of the studies done on these drugs and allow you to form your own educated opinion.

If it is true that statin drugs such as Lipitor, Crestor, Mevacor, Pravacol and Zocor lower your risk for heart disease, then you would expect that studies would show that having lowered cholesterol will result in a longer lifespan.

The Journal of the American Medical Association reported on a study of 5,170 subjects taking the drug Pravacol, versus 5,185 subjects treated with "usual care" (changes in lifestyle). The study lasted four years and revealed that Pravacol reduced cholesterol levels in the subjects by 17 percent, as opposed to only 8 percent in the "usual care" group. The all-cause mortality findings, which measures the number of people who died from any cause during the study, was nearly equal between the two groups. The coronary heart disease rates were also no different.

The Framingham Study is one of the longest ongoing research projects study-

ing heart disease. In 1987, researchers reported that after 30 years of follow up, there is no increased overall mortality with subjects over 50 with high cholesterol. Furthermore, researchers reported that falling cholesterol levels were found to *increase* the cardiovascular death rate – a 14 percent increase for every one milligram/deciliter drop in cholesterol levels.

A study of 11,563 subjects found that those with cholesterol levels below 160 mg/dl had a 49 percent increase in "all cause" mortality, as compared to those subjects with cholesterol levels over 160 mg/dl. Non-cardiac deaths increased by 2.27 times in the low cholesterol group as compared to the control group. Other studies have also found a correlation with low cholesterol levels and increased risk for mortality from cancer of the lung, liver, pancreas and bone marrow as well as increased risk of death from respiratory, liver and digestive diseases.

Another study of 5,491 men aged 45 to 68 found that falling cholesterol levels from 180-239 down to less than 180 were

associated with a 30 percent higher risk of all cause mortality and a significantly increased risk of death from cancers of the esophagus, prostate, and bone marrow.

Finally, in 1997 patients older than 70 who were studied, researchers found no correlation between elevated cholesterol levels and increases in mortality from coronary heart disease, all cause mortality, or hospitalization from heart attacks or angina.

I'm not telling you not to take these drugs, because I'm not your doctor. But you should make your own educated decision based upon the research and not upon misinformation provided by the drug companies and the doctors prescribing them.

If you would like a list of the actual studies cited, e-mail me at DrAieta@aol.com.

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WORKING AT IT

Women's Fitness with Lisa Thomas

Some people say athletes are born, not made.

It is true that not everyone can be a professional in their chosen sport, but everyone can become a better athlete. No matter if you have natural talent or not, you have to possess drive, determination, focus, preparation and dedication to be a successful athlete.

After years of designing a periodization program and competing, I know my training has a focus. I have improved at every race and every show. I do the work, keep track of workouts, log my progress, train with the best and believe in my training. As such, I know it will take me where I want to go.

A planned program should have the sport and athlete or team in mind. Periodization has been scientifically proven to give results, keeping the overall athlete's fitness up and performance results in physical and physiological peak of the athlete.

In programs like this, each training phase builds on the previous one. A few variables are volume, intensity, rest, recovery and interval training (mode of training). The general periodization cycle has the formula of general preparation, specific preparation and competition (session training). These phases, when done correctly, coincide with the athlete's sport-specific event making it an overall training program for improvement.

We start the phases off with general preparation: Off-season training is essential to all athletes as it provides the base of strength for the development of power, strength and conditioning, strong core and stabilizers for shoulders, hips, knees and ankles. Off-season periods should be about 12 weeks long to allow ample time to build base strength. Prepare your body for the sport you are playing; you can also incorporate low-moderate levels of plyometrics, agility drills and sprints. Examples include: jump rope, double-leg jumps, form running and low box jumps.

Moving into the specific preparation phase, preseason strength training and power training are more sport specific. This is where Olympic lifts are important for players to gain power and speed. The lifts should have movements mimicking what you are asking your body to do in the specific sport.

This is a decrease in number of exercises and increase in sport-specific exercises. Finding drills to help you increase the rate of force and propulsion time and decrease the potential for fatigue.

Next is the competition phase. In-season, the emphasis is on sports performance, not on resistance training. A fine line separates over-training and not training enough. Within 72 hours detraining (losing the benefits of training) can occur; regular training must continue during the

season.

The intensity of the interval training is high and the rest time becomes high. In this phase, the focus should be on speed and power; intensity is adjusted to meet the needs of the competition or sporting event – the emphasis is on quality.

Schedule your time wisely; progress comes with time, drive, determination, focus, preparation and dedication. If you are lost on what type of training you should be doing, hire a trainer who has experience in getting athletes ready for their events. In fact, I'm guessing that if you look at the tiny writing below, you might find some contact info for one of those trainers who'd



be delighted to give you a hand.

Lisa Thomas is a personal trainer/fitness coach in the Greater Springfield area, as well as owner of Thomas Fitness Center and Fit Kidz of Massachusetts. Contact her at (413) 426-5543 or t.fitness@hotmail.com, or visit www.thomasfitnesscenter.com.

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