



## Red Yeast Rice Extract: A Natural Way To Balance Cholesterol & Reduce The Risk Of Heart Disease

*Chinese red yeast rice has significant potential to reduce healthcare costs and contribute to public health by reducing heart disease risk in individuals with moderate elevations of circulating cholesterol levels.*

~ *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*

**I**s your cholesterol moderately elevated? Are you currently taking prescription drugs to manage your cholesterol that cause various difficult side effects? Are you looking for an affordable approach to cholesterol management? If so, red yeast rice extract (RYRE) may be right for you.\*

### Cholesterol & Heart Disease

A number of factors contribute to heart disease, including inflammation, fats, diet/lifestyle, genetic makeup, and vitamin D deficiency. Current conventional medical practice largely focuses on cholesterol, which is essential to normal body function but also can be life-threatening. The body requires cholesterol to build cell membranes, produce hormones (including estrogen, testosterone and cortisol), and create liver bile, which helps detoxify the system. When combined with fat, platelets and inflammatory cells, however, excess cholesterol causes atherosclerosis, the development of plaques in the arteries. These plaques can enlarge and block arteries to the heart, brain, kidneys or limbs, or can rupture and cause artery-blocking clots.

The National Cholesterol Education Panel Adult Treatment Panel-III (ATP-III) spells out these somewhat limited guidelines for target cholesterol levels:

#### LDL ("Bad" Cholesterol)

Optimal: <100 mg/dl - High: 160-189 mg/dl  
Very High: >190 mg/dl

#### HDL ("Good" Cholesterol)

High: 60 mg/dl - Low: <40 mg/dl

#### Total Cholesterol

Desirable: <200 mg/dl - High: >240 mg/dl

The ATP-III adjusts target LDL (a frequently inaccurate,

calculated number, not a measured one) to take into account certain risk factors, including cigarette smoking, hypertension (BP>140/90 mmHg), personal history of heart disease, family history of premature coronary heart disease, age (men>45 years; women >55 years), and diabetes. The problem with this approach is that it does not provide a complete or accurate picture and there are better available measures of cholesterol, including measured LDL, triglycerides, apoprotein B, and LDL particle number (obtained by request from a physician through the NMR LipoProfile test). It is equally important to examine indexes of hidden inflammation, including C-reactive protein (CRP) and lipoprotein(a).

### The Conventional Approach: Statin Drugs

When faced with elevated LDL in a patient, conventional physicians frequently prescribe the class of drugs known as statins (HMG CoA reductase inhibitors). These drugs, including Zocor®, Pravachol®, and Lipitor®, block cellular production of cholesterol. Jay S. Cohen, M.D., a leading statin drug expert, emphasizes the correlation between dose and risk of side effects and cautions that most people with elevated cholesterol do not need high doses. (Physicians typically prescribe 20-40mg to reduce LDL by 30-40%.) Statin drugs' common side effects include fatigue, muscle pain and degeneration, joint pain, memory impairment, depression, gastrointestinal discomfort, kidney injury and failure, liver injury, and increased risk of heart failure. Some studies also suggest that statins could be carcinogenic.

### A Natural Approach: Red Yeast Rice Extract

Red yeast rice extract is produced by fermenting rice with a reddish yeast and has been used in traditional medicine in China since 800 A.D. It contains not only approximately ten different effective compounds, particularly lovastatin (the statin in Mevacor®), that are similar to those in prescription statins, but also various cholesterol-lowering compounds (such as plant sterols) not found in statin drugs. More than 34 clinical studies in the United States and China have shown RYRE to be a viable alternative to statin drugs in many patients. Not only may RYRE reduce LDL and lower triglycerides, but clini-

cal practice results have also evidenced its potential to raise HDL. As all RYRE products are not equal, however, it is important to use a product (such as Cholestene from HPF, LLC ) that has adequate levels of lovastatin. The usual RYRE dose of 1,200 mg twice-daily with meals contains about 5-15 mg of lovastatin and can lower LDL by 23%, triglycerides by 15%, and total cholesterol by 19%.

While most patients using RYRE do not experience the typical side effects of statins, it is important to note that it, like statin drugs, blocks the body's synthesis of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), essential to energy production and concentrated in the heart muscle. Julian M. Whitaker, M.D., a renowned alternative practitioner, recommends that all patients taking statin drugs take 100-200mg/day of supplemental CoQ10. While some experts recommend that patients taking RYRE take as much as 300mg/day of CoQ10, clinical practice of this writer has shown 200mg of ubiquinol, the most highly bioavailable form of CoQ10, to be a sufficiently protective supplemental dose.

Conventional medicine maintains that cholesterol is a key contributor to atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease. Although no single conventional or natural approach can alone prevent heart disease, RYRE can be a valid alternative to statin drugs when used with the guidance of a healthcare professional as part of a general heart-healthy program. Programs focused on maintaining healthy cholesterol levels ideally should also include various lifestyle and nutritional strategies such as losing weight, getting adequate sleep, eating more fish (i.e., wild Alaskan salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, white albacore tuna, and halibut), and reducing refined carbohydrates and those with a high-glycemic index (i.e., fructose, candy, desserts, rice, potatoes, and pasta). Combining RYRE with other nutritional supplements, such as balanced omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, magnesium, and niacin, may increase its effectiveness. Since everyone's body is unique, it is important to keep in mind that one treatment does not suit everyone. The best approach to cardiovascular wellness is one that is as individualized as possible.

*References available upon request.*

*Neither the statements above nor RYRE have been evaluated by the FDA and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Consult with your health care practitioner before discontinuing use of any medication.*

*Submitted by Michael Dworkin, P.D., M.S., a Registered Pharmacist and State Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CT Certification #00203), and J. Erika Dworkin, J.D., Dip.C.N./Board Cert. Holistic Nutrition (pending). Owner of the Manchester Parkade Health Shoppe (860.646.8178; 378 West Middle Turnpike, Manchester), Mr. Dworkin has been guiding patients since 1956 and is available for consultation by appointment. Erika is available to speak to groups. Additional references are available upon request.*