

Homocysteine

Homocysteine is a biological marker associated with an increased risk for:

- Alcoholism
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Complications of Pregnancy
- Depression
- Heart Disease
- Non-insulin-dependent Diabetes
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Neural Tube Defects
- Parkinson's Disease
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Schizophrenia
- Stroke

Homocysteine should be found in low amounts in healthy individuals. It is an intermediate step which must be passed through when your body produces a wide variety of nutrients and compounds essential for health. If homocysteine increases or builds-up, it indicates your body is now unable to pass through this step and produce optimal amounts of these critical nutrients and compounds. Because these nutrients and compounds are required to maintain health in every cell and system of the body, increased homocysteine can literally lead to almost any chronic disease.

The Cause

- Lifestyle Choices
- Nutrient Deficiencies
- Genetic Factors

The Risk Factors

- Chronic alcohol intake increases homocysteine
- Drinking coffee daily is associated with higher homocysteine level
- Cigarette smoking appears to increase homocysteine (The combination of cigarettes and coffee is associated with particularly high homocysteine)
- Vegetarians tend to have higher homocysteine level
- In women, homocysteine usually increases after menopause.
- Genetic factors can predispose some individuals to have increased homocysteine

Diagnosis

- The best way to determine whether you have high homocysteine is to ask your health care provider to run a blood test for homocysteine levels.
- Your health care provider can then arrange for a blood draw and a laboratory determination of your homocysteine levels.

The Answer

Although the effects of high homocysteine are linked to a wide range of devastating chronic diseases, there are specific steps you can take to reduce your risk and lower homocysteine.

- Make lifestyle changes which minimize the risk factors you can control.
- Supplement your diet with the specific nutrients shown to lower homocysteine:
 - Vitamin B6
 - Vitamin B12
 - Folic acid
 - Betaine (eat fresh beetroot, drink beetroot juice)