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# Half of Latinos Unaware They Have High Cholesterol

Written by Chuck Green | Published on June 24, 2015



**Researchers say lack of awareness and access to treatment is putting Latinos in the United States at risk for cholesterol-related diseases.**



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Latino adults might be in poor health — and not even know it.

Nearly half of Latinos in the United States are unaware that they have high cholesterol, and less than a third receive any kind of cholesterol treatment, according to a new study in the [Journal of the American Heart Association](#).

Latinos are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, with 52 million people. Yet, in contrast with other ethnic groups, their awareness and management of high cholesterol clearly lags, experts say.

Consequently, they say educating Latinos on the importance of maintaining healthy cholesterol levels could significantly reduce heart disease in this country.

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## Low Awareness, Little Treatment

Researchers reviewed data from 16,415 Latinos, between 18 and 75 years of age, who participated in the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos.

They found that 49 percent of Latinos had no idea their cholesterol levels were high. Of those who were aware, only 29 percent received treatment.

High cholesterol was more common among men than women, 44 percent versus 40 percent. Men also had lower rates of cholesterol treatment compared with women, 28 percent versus 30 percent.

Comparatively, [CDC.gov reports](#) that among non-Hispanic blacks, 30 percent of men and 33 percent of women in the United States had high LDL cholesterol. Meanwhile, 29 percent of non-Hispanic white men and 32 percent of women in that category had higher than normal cholesterol levels.

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## Other Unhealthy Factors

Additionally, 40 percent of the Latino study participants were obese, 25 percent had high blood pressure, and 17 percent had diabetes. Those are all risk factors for heart disease and stroke. However, those with these conditions were more likely to know they had high cholesterol.

Younger adults, women, the uninsured, those with lower income, and more recent immigrants were less likely to have their high cholesterol controlled.

Compared with their foreign-born counterparts, U.S.-born Latinos were more likely to be unaware of their high cholesterol. However, longer U.S. residency correlated with higher cholesterol awareness, treatment, and control.

"Many Hispanics have high cholesterol, approximately 45 percent, probably due to a mix of genes and diet," said Dr. Carlos Rodriguez, MPH, the study's lead author and an associate professor of medicine and epidemiology at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

More surprising is the lack of awareness, treatment, and control, he said.

"That needs to change since awareness is the first step in prevention," said

Rodriguez.

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## Effective Treatments Noted

In this study, treatment was effective in 64 percent of those treated, signaling that awareness and management can work in lowering cholesterol levels.

Researchers said addressing these gaps is critical to reducing Latinos' risks for high cholesterol, heart disease, and heart attack, and improving overall public health.

Lack of awareness is a problem with roots at different levels for Latinos. There are also difficulties with access to care, patient/provider difficulties, language barriers, and cultural insensitivity, Rodriguez said.

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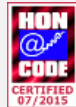
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