

# Heart Disease Is an Inflammation Problem, According to New Scientific Statement

5 MIN READ

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# Cholesterol isn't the whole story. A new cardiology statement makes it clear: chronic inflammation is just as critical for heart health.

For decades, cholesterol has been the headline villain in the fight against heart disease. Doctors tracked it, people lowered it, and entire industries built around statins and low-fat diets took center stage. But cholesterol is only part of the story.

Scientists have long suspected another culprit simmering in the background, and now they're going all in. "Inflammation is a theme that runs through all the major diseases: heart disease, cancer, diabetes, brain conditions," cardiologist and longevity researcher **Dr. Eric Topol told us during *Super Age Live***. "The immune system drives inflammation, and lifestyle factors like diet, exercise, and sleep all work by tuning that system."

And now, a major new scientific statement from **the American College of Cardiology** (ACC) makes it clear: chronic, low-grade inflammation is a central driver of cardiovascular disease.

## Heart Disease Isn't Just About Cholesterol

*"The evidence linking chronic, low-grade inflammation to the initiation and*

*progression of cardiovascular disease is robust... We have thus entered an era when the evidence linking inflammation with ASCVD is no longer exploratory but is compelling and clinically actionable,” reads the statement.*

Translation: Inflammation is just as significant as cholesterol when we’re measuring, preventing, and treating heart disease.

## The Blood Test That Reveals Hidden Risk (hsCRP)

The marker at the center of this shift is high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP). It’s a simple blood test that detects silent, low-grade inflammation.

- ■ **<1 mg/L** = lower risk
- ■ **1–3 mg/L** = average risk
- ■ **>3 mg/L** = higher risk

If your hsCRP is >10 mg/L, it’s usually due to infection, meaning you should retest when you’re well.

Why it matters: Studies show **hsCRP predicts heart attack**, stroke, and cardiovascular death as powerfully as LDL cholesterol, and sometimes more. Even in people with **normal LDL**, a high hsCRP signals elevated risk.

## What Your hsCRP Number Means

- ■ **If you haven’t had cardiovascular disease (CVD) and your hsCRP is average or high**, the recommendations are earlier lifestyle changes and a conversation about statin therapy, even if your cholesterol looks good.
- ■ **If you’ve had CVD and your hsCRP is above 2 mg/L**, this signals *residual inflammatory risk*. Even on statins, it’s a red flag. Talk to your doctor about ways to

lower inflammation, including lifestyle and drug therapies. In fact, the FDA has now approved low-dose colchicine (a drug long used for gout) to **reduce the risk of heart attacks**, strokes, and cardiovascular death in patients with stable heart disease.

The takeaway? Don't just track LDL. Track inflammation too. Ask your doctor to add hsCRP to your next lipid panel.

## Lifestyle Shifts That Lower Inflammation

Here's the part that should sound familiar: the most reliable way to lower hsCRP is not a pill, but your daily habits.

### The checklist that works:

- ■ **Focus on anti-inflammatory dietary patterns** like the Mediterranean or DASH diet.
  - ■ Emphasize consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and olive oil.
  - ■ Increase dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids; 2-3 fish meals/week are recommended—preferably fatty fish high in EPA+DHA.
  - ■ Minimize red and processed meats, refined carbohydrates, and sugary beverages.

- **Engage in ?150 min/week of moderate exercise** or 75 min/week of intense exercise.
- ■ **Quit smoking** to reduce chronic low-grade inflammation.
- ■ **Maintain a healthy weight** to attenuate systemic inflammation.

**Bottom line:** Your habits are your most powerful anti-inflammatory medicine.

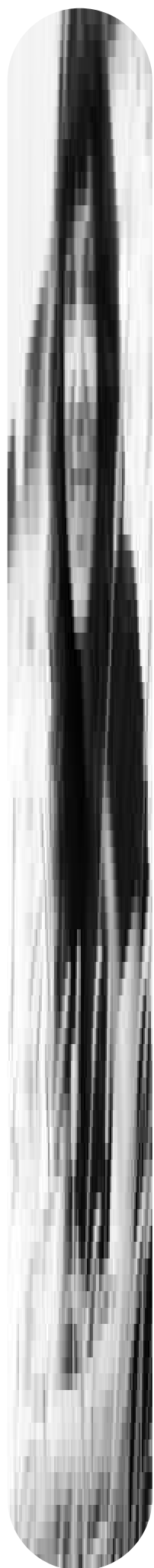
Heart disease is still the world's top killer. For decades, the story was cholesterol. Now, inflammation is center stage. This means longevity strategies must evolve: if you want to add strong, healthy years, you need to know your hsCRP and take action if it's high. The ACC puts it bluntly: *"The time for action has arrived."*

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