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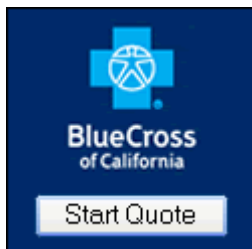
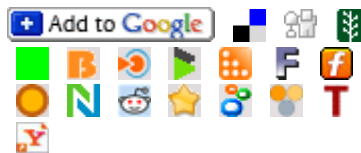
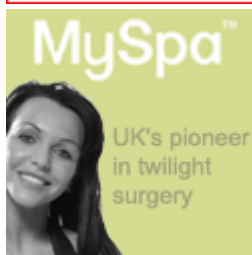
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## Cholesterol causes changes in gene expression

Medical Research News  
Published: Thursday, 14-Jun-2007

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**Experts from the University of Granada carried out research on atherosclerosis from its earliest stages to discover the**

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**origin of  
atheromatous  
plaques, fatty  
deposits  
gradually and  
irregularly  
formed in the  
main arteries,  
causing the  
narrowing of  
the blood  
vessel.**

Although there are many causes for this disease, **UGR** scientists focused on smooth muscle cells (SMCs) transformation into dedifferentiated and proliferative cells, able to carry lipids in culture. In this sense, cells from animals fed with control diet represent a difference. Experts carried out an early cell atherosclerosis experimental model with chickens, as these birds develop atherosclerosis very rapidly: a 20-day high cholesterol diet is enough to detect atheromatous plaques in their arteries.

Experts obtained SMCs from arteries before the formation of the plaques. Ten days after the start of the high cholesterol diet, when atheromatous plaques are not still visible using an electron microscopic, aortic SMCs are extracted and in-vitro cultured. Experts cultured SMC-Cs (obtained from animals without a cholesterol dietary supplement) and SMC-Chs (extracted from animals with cholesterol dietary

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supplement) under the same conditions. After genetic analysis, scientists confirmed that regarding the samples (without cholesterol) modifications took place in birds fed with a high cholesterol diet. Differences show that cholesterol causes changes in messenger RNA synthesis in proteins related to lipid metabolism control, proliferation and apoptosis (programmed cell death) and, therefore, that diet has an influence on gene expression.

Through other studies, these experts discovered that, whilst cholesterol causes changes in gene expression, fish oil reverts such changes. In this case, scientists fed the animals with a high cholesterol diet for ten days, then substituted cholesterol for fish oil (rich in omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids) for another ten days.

<http://www.ugr.es>

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