

BOTTOM LINE
Natural Healing
With Dr. Mark Stengler

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DEEPER CURES FROM AMERICA'S TOP NATURAL PHYSICIAN

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THE URGENT TEST FOR HEART DISEASE

Lipoprotein-associated phospholipase A₂ (Lp-PLA₂)—it's a mouthful, but for the sake of your heart, it's a good idea to get to know it. Lp-PLA₂ is an enzyme produced by the body in response to inflammation in the arteries. Your Lp-PLA₂ level is believed to be the best way of gauging the imminent risk for heart attack or stroke, especially if you have already survived either one.

Blood levels of Lp-PLA₂ reflect levels of inflammation in blood vessels. Inflammation in blood vessels now is regarded as the cause of coronary artery disease. Lp-PLA₂ identifies your acute risk for heart attack and stroke because it is found in high concentrations in plaques that are ready to rupture. But that doesn't mean that you should no longer be tested for C-reactive protein (CRP) and/or triglycerides, which gauge the gradual narrowing of arteries. Together, all of these tests give a more complete picture of your heart's health.

In a study in *Circulation*, researchers at Harvard Medical School tracked levels of Lp-PLA₂ in more than 3,000 patients who had survived a heart attack or a serious episode of unstable angina, a type of heart pain caused by a lack of oxygen. After two years, people with the highest Lp-PLA₂ levels were 33% more likely to suffer another heart attack, stroke or cardiovascular-related death.

My advice: Ask your doctor to measure your blood levels of Lp-PLA₂ if

you are at risk for cardiovascular disease...if your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol or CRP levels are high...or if you have survived a heart attack or stroke. The FDA-approved Lp-PLA₂ test is called the PLAC test. The lower your Lp-PLA₂, the better. If your Lp-PLA₂ is 235 ng/mL or higher, you have an above-average risk for a heart attack or stroke.

Conventional doctors treat cardiovascular risk factors with statin drugs, which can produce dangerous side effects, including muscle weakness and liver disease. I recommend working with a holistic doctor to see if you can lower your risk factors for cardiovascular disease—without statin drugs. For my own patients with high levels of Lp-PLA₂, I recommend consuming a Mediterranean-style diet and taking several anti-inflammatory supplements, including curcumin (turmeric extract), omega-3 fish oil, vitamin D and resveratrol. Your own doctor can recommend a customized plan for you. ■■

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