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## Letters

### Cholesterol conundrum

"Teasing out dietary cholesterol's impact" (SN: 6/13/92, p.390) impressed me with its potential to save the lives of millions afflicted with heart disease. Medical experts tell us that the relationship to high serum cholesterol levels is (1) causal—an origin of the disease, and (2) symptomatic—an accurate indicator of worsening disease in sick people. Experts also tell us that large population studies prove conclusively that diet is a root factor governing heart disease.

Yet when sick people change their diets, the usual result is that little or no improvement in reducing cholesterol levels occurs. Ironically, dietary selection (the cause) appears to have little benefit as the cure. This contradictory evidence is confusing, encouraging the fatal attitude, "If diet is no cure, then I'll eat as I please."

Your article gives the solution to the puzzle. The answer lies in "saturation." Once the body exceeds its saturation level, adding more only

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Cover: A dying bacterium leaks endotoxin after an attack by antibiotics. The body's response to this endotoxin launches a sequence of events that often results in septic shock. (Photo: Jerry L. Shenep/St. Jude Children's Hospital, Memphis, Tenn.)

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forces our organs to work overtime cleaning up the excess. As the article explains, the human body's saturation point is so low that many if not most American diets are four or five times higher than saturation. Cutting back dietary cholesterol and fats by half (a real pain and sacrifice) still leaves us two or three times higher than the saturation level. No wonder that changing diet has little measurable effect on cholesterol! We didn't change it enough!

The good news is: Understanding how saturation works gives the lifesaving key to controlling heart disease. Dietary habits need to be quite strict. To succeed, the individual needs (1) accurate information, (2) high motivation, and (3) good self-discipline. Any one of the three is difficult—but all three together are necessary.

The bad news is: See the good news above.  
*Warren H. Taylor Jr.*  
*Long Beach Calif.*

### Loose Latin

In the blurb describing your July 25 cover photo, you refer to purple loosestrife as "a *flora*

*non grata*." *Flora* is not a flower or a plant; it is *all* the plant life of a time or place.

I'm afraid it has to be *flos non gratus*. Sounds awful, doesn't it?

*Arthur Morgan*  
*New York, N.Y.*

### Just say NO

I read with great interest "The Root of Impotence: Does nitric oxide hold the key?" (SN: 7/4/92, p.10). To an aging male, this report gave a wonderful and totally unexpected new meaning to the old saying, "NO news is good news."

*Robert Munday*  
*Austin, Texas*

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All letters subject to editing.



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