



President Reagan announced he was nominating Arizona Judge Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Pediatricians take aim at cholesterol

Group recommends drugs in some cases

By **Lindsey Tanner**
Associated Press

CHICAGO — For the first time, an influential doctors group is recommending that some children as young as 8 be given cholesterol-fighting drugs to ward off future heart problems.

It is the strongest guidance ever given by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which released its new guidelines today. The academy also recommends low-fat milk for 1-year-olds and wider cholesterol testing.

Dr. Stephen Daniels, of the academy's nutrition committee, says the new advice is based on mounting evidence that damage leading to heart disease, the nation's leading killer, begins early in life.

It also stems from recent research showing that cholesterol-fighting drugs are generally safe

for children, Daniels said.

"If we are more aggressive about this in childhood, I think we can have an impact on what happens later in life ... and avoid some of these heart attacks and strokes in adulthood," Daniels said. He has worked as a consultant to Abbott Laboratories and Merck & Co., but not on matters involving their cholesterol drugs.

Drug treatment would generally be targeted for kids at least 8 years old who have too much LDL, the "bad" cholesterol, along with other risky conditions, including obesity and high blood pressure.

Pediatricians should routinely check the cholesterol of children with a family history of inherited cholesterol disease or with parents or grandparents who developed heart disease at an early age, the recommendations say. Screening is advised for kids whose family history isn't known and those who are overweight, obese or have other heart disease risk factors.

Screening is recommended sometime after age 2 but no later than age 10, at routine checkups.

WHAT THE EXPERTS ADVISE

New advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics urges doctors to screen more children for high cholesterol and to put more of them on cholesterol-lowering drugs, including those as young as 8. Here are the details:

Which children should have cholesterol tests?

Between the ages of 2 and 10, children with a family history of inherited cholesterol disease or with parents or grandparents who got heart disease at an early age.

Screening also is advised for kids who are overweight or have other heart disease risk factors and those whose family history isn't known.

Because obesity is a risk factor for heart disease and often is accompanied by cholesterol problems, the recommendations say low-fat milk is appropriate for 1-year-olds "for whom overweight or obesity is a concern."

The academy has long recommended against reduced-fat milk for children up to age 2 because

Which children should doctors consider putting on cholesterol-lowering drugs?

Children who are at least 8 years old who have too much LDL, the "bad" cholesterol, along with other risky conditions, including obesity and high blood pressure. Overweight children with too little HDL, the "good" cholesterol, should focus on improving their diet and boosting physical activity levels.

What other recommendations did the academy make?

Instead of whole milk, low-fat milk — with 1 percent or 2 percent milk fat — is preferable for 1-year-olds who are overweight or whose family has a history of obesity or heart disease.

saturated fats are needed for brain development.

"But now we have the obesity epidemic and people are thinking maybe this isn't such a good idea," said Dr. Frank Greer of the University of Wisconsin, co-author of the guidelines report, which appears in the July edition of Pediatrics, the group's medical journal.