

The Cholesterol Connection

Is cholesterol bad for you or good for you? Take the time this September, Cholesterol Education Month, to familiarize yourself with cholesterol’s impact on your health.



Cholesterol comes both from foods we eat and from our livers. Not all cholesterol is bad. In fact, this waxy, fatlike substance is essential to the good health of our body’s cells. But these fats do not dissolve in blood, so proteins in our blood carry cholesterol around our bodies. These carrier proteins are called *lipoproteins*.

Most often, when people think of cholesterol, they think of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL “bad” cholesterol. This type of cholesterol is considered bad because it creates a plaque—a hard, thick deposit that can clog arteries and make them less flexible. As LDL collects in the walls of our blood vessels, it can cause blockages and may lead to heart attack and heart disease. High-density lipoprotein, or HDL cholesterol, helps carry excess cholesterol back to the liver, where LDL is broken down and removed from the body. Both LDL and HDL levels can be measured with a simple blood test, helping doctors assess overall cardiovascular health and risk.

Foods high in trans fats and many sources of saturated fat can raise LDL cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease. Foods rich in unsaturated fats—such as olive oil, salmon, avocados, nuts, and seeds—can help improve cholesterol levels when they replace less healthy fats in the diet. Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables also support heart health.

Eating well is not the only way to improve cholesterol. Regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and quitting smoking can all help lower cardiovascular risk and promote healthier cholesterol levels. Now that you know more about cholesterol, have a heart and pass your newfound knowledge along.

September Birthdays

In astrology, those born between September 1 and 22 are Virgos. Virgos are observant, independent, reliable, and intellectual. Virgos have sharply organized minds and enjoy analyzing problems in an attempt to bring order to chaos, no matter the consequences. Those born between September 23 and 30 balance the scales of Libra. Libras seek equality, justice, and harmony. Eager to cooperate, Libras are charming diplomats who seek compromise and goodwill.

- Boxcar Willie (singer) – September 1, 1931
- Bob Newhart (actor) – September 5, 1929
- Jane Curtin (actress) – September 6, 1947
- Otis Redding (singer) – September 9, 1941
- Agatha Christie (writer) – September 15, 1890
- Sophia Loren (actress) – September 20, 1934
- Jim Henson (puppeteer) – September 24, 1936
- Jack LaLanne (health guru) – September 26, 1914
- Gene Autry (singer) – September 29, 1907
- Buddy Rich (drummer) – September 30, 1917

Switchboard Switch Out



Emma M. Nutt made history on September 1, 1878, when she became the first female telephone operator. It had been customary for teenage boys to be telephone operators. However, these youth proved impatient over the phone, played pranks on callers, and often used crude language. Alexander Graham Bell himself came up with the solution to hire young women, and he started by hiring Emma Nutt. Needless to say, Nutt’s cool, soothing voice transformed the new industry. Emma’s sister Stella Nutt was hired just a few hours later. Emma Nutt was so successful that telephone operation became an exclusively female profession. Indeed, women relished the professional opportunity, which was considered a step up from domestic duties and factory work. Women would operate telephones for almost the next 100 years.

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Celebrating September

Classical Music Month

Self-Improvement Month

Courtesy Month

Newspaper Carrier Day
September 4

World Beard Day
September 5

Labor Day (U.S.)
September 7

Chocolate Milkshake Day
September 12

Line Dance Week
September 14–19

International Day of
Democracy
September 15

Fall Equinox
September 22

Love Note Day
September 26

Coffee Day
September 29

Back to the '70s

September often marks a return to routines, and during the 1970s, it also signaled the start of a new television season. Long before streaming and on-demand viewing, fall TV premieres were major events. Families gathered around the television to watch the first episodes of returning favorites and discover new shows that would soon become part of everyday conversation.

The 1970s are often remembered as a golden age of television sitcoms. Programs such as *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and *Happy Days* reflected changing social attitudes while providing plenty of humor. Their characters, catchphrases, and storylines became cultural touchstones, influencing entertainment for decades to come.

Music was equally influential. The decade saw the rise of disco, a dance-driven style that filled clubs and radio stations. Funk also gained widespread popularity, blending powerful rhythms, bass lines, and energetic performances. Artists experimented with new sounds, helping shape modern popular music.

Fashion followed suit with bold styles and colorful self-expression. Bell-bottom jeans became one of the decade’s most recognizable trends, often paired with platform shoes, wide collars, and eye-catching patterns. Whether on city streets, school campuses, or television screens, 1970s fashion embraced individuality and flair.

One song in particular has become closely associated with September itself. In September 1978, Earth, Wind & Fire released the hit song “September.” Its upbeat rhythm and memorable chorus helped it become one of the most enduring songs of the era. Decades later, it remains a staple at celebrations, sporting events, and community gatherings.

From disco dance floors and funk concerts to sitcom premieres and bell-bottom jeans, the 1970s left a lasting mark on American culture. Every September, as television networks unveil new seasons and the familiar strains of “September” begin to play once again, echoes of that remarkable decade are never far away.

Superstition Busters



If you find the number 13 unlucky, then September 13, Defy Superstition Day, may be just what the doctor ordered. Superstitions are beliefs that contradict rational thought. If they are so irrational, why are so many people superstitious? Psychologist B. F. Skinner hypothesized that superstitious behaviors stem from the concept of reinforcement; that is, a person performs an action expecting a reward. What makes superstitions unique is that superstitious people repeat an action over and over, even if the reward is not realized. For example, someone may always throw salt over their shoulder to ward off bad luck, even though there is no immediate benefit or consequence.

Why *do* we throw salt to ward off bad luck? The salt superstition stems from Leonardo da Vinci's painting *The Last Supper*. In the painting, Judas—the apostle who betrayed Jesus—is depicted knocking over the salt. The act of spilling salt has since been associated with treachery and lies. The act of throwing it over your left shoulder is to blind the devil lurking there.

Do you walk under ladders? It's a common superstition that it is bad luck to do so. This superstition began in ancient Egypt. A ladder leaning against a wall forms a triangle, which was considered a sacred shape, similar to the shape of the pyramids. Passing under the ladder was considered an insult to the gods, a superstition that carries on to this day.

Perhaps the most prevalent superstition is to knock on wood to prevent disappointment and promote good fortune. Many ancient pagan cultures worshipped trees because they were believed to be inhabited by spirits. It was common to lay hands on trees and ask for favors or give thanks. Of course, on September 13, you'll need to defy all these superstitions by spilling salt, walking under ladders, and not knocking on wood. While you're at it, open an umbrella indoors and break a mirror for good measure.

One and Done

There is no surer path to celebrity and then back to obscurity than the one-hit wonder. September 25 is One-Hit Wonder Day, a day for us to remember all those musicians who wrote one hit song that dominated the charts and then were forgotten. Perhaps one of the best-known one-hit wonders is "Earth Angel," the Penguins' 1954 doo-wop classic. With sales estimated at more than 10 million copies, it is often cited among the most successful one-hit wonders of all time. But don't take our word for it. Every decade has had its share of one-hit wonders: 1963's "Wipeout" by the Surfaris, 1977's "You Light Up My Life" by Debby Boone, 1983's "Puttin' on the Ritz" by Taco, 1991's "Walking in Memphis" by Marc Cohn, and the 2005 hit "Listen to Your Heart" by D.H.T. If you don't recall any of these songs, you're not alone, but that doesn't bother Steven Greenberg, who in 1980 wrote the song "Funkytown." When asked about his sole hit, Greenberg says, "I call it 'one-hit wonderful.'"

A Paper for the People



On September 3, 1833, in New York City, Benjamin Day began printing his daily newspaper, *The Sun*, for which he charged one penny per copy. For this reason, September 3 is celebrated as Penny Press Day. Day's small paper was groundbreaking for many reasons. First, it brought the news to the masses.

Working-class families and immigrants could at last afford to be well informed. Secondly, it relied on advertising, not subscriptions, for revenue, which helped keep its cost low. The invention of the steam engine also aided Day's cause. In 1840, he could print 4,000 copies an hour; by 1851, he was printing 18,000. Day was also the first newspaperman to hire reporters to follow stories. Thanks to his ingenuity, Day became New York's first great newspaper magnate.

The Write Stuff

It's happened to many of us: You want to buy a greeting card, and the next thing you know, you've spent countless minutes reading every card in the aisle. But did you ever stop to wonder who penned all those greeting cards? Most greeting card writers remain anonymous, but that shouldn't stop you from celebrating Hug a Greeting Card Writer Day on September 18.

Despite the rise of digital greetings, text messages, and social media, the greeting card industry continues to thrive. Americans still purchase billions of greeting cards each year, generating roughly seven billion dollars in annual sales. While many people now send birthday wishes online, physical cards remain popular for milestones, holidays, expressions of sympathy, and heartfelt occasions. Perhaps that is because, deep down, we still value tangible messages of love and appreciation. After all, many of us have old greeting cards tucked away in drawers or keepsake boxes. It is the job of the greeting card writer to find the perfect words for our thoughts and feelings.

Opportunities abound for freelance writers who want to break into the greeting card business. While artwork and design may capture a shopper's attention, the message inside often determines whether a card is purchased. Greeting cards generally come in three styles: poetic verse, prose, and humorous punchlines. Writers must be sure to match their submissions to the needs of a publisher. Payment varies by publisher and card type, but writers can earn anywhere from \$25 to well over \$100 per card.

In recent years, companies have introduced everything from intricate pop-up designs to highly personalized cards created online and delivered through the mail. Some services even offer handwritten messages produced on the sender's behalf. As greeting cards continue to evolve alongside technology, one thing remains unchanged: People still appreciate receiving thoughtful words delivered in a personal and memorable way.

The Curious Case of &

September 8 is the day to acknowledge & appreciate & celebrate the amazing ampersand. This shorthand glyph for the word *and* was once the 27th letter of the alphabet. But before it was known as an ampersand, it was simply the symbol &, which stems from Latin. In ancient Rome, the word for *and* was *et*. Roman scribes, looking for a shortcut, combined the two letters in cursive script, which looked like &.

The word *ampersand* evolved by accident when the symbol & became part of the alphabet. In the early 1800s, schoolchildren reciting the alphabet would say "X, Y, Z, and per se and," meaning "and, by itself, *and*." Over time, the repeated phrase "and per se *and*" gradually blended together in speech, evolving into the single word *ampersand*, which became the name of the symbol. The ampersand wasn't the only letter to be dropped from the alphabet. In Old English, the letter *thorn* represented the *th* sound, and the letter *wynn* evolved into the letter *W*.

Gnocchi Night



In Argentina, the 29th of every month is Gnocchi Day, with families gathering together to make and eat this delightful little dumpling. So this September 29, why not try some gnocchi yourself?

Gnocchi are a form of potato pasta originating in Italy. When Italian immigrants came to Argentina in the 19th century, they brought with them their favorite Italian recipes. In Argentina, payday was on the first of the month, so by the 29th, most families were left with little in their larders, perhaps just some potatoes and flour, the key ingredients for gnocchi. Families could whip up a quick, inexpensive, and filling meal. Even today, travelers to Argentina will find gnocchi on the menu every 29th day of the month.