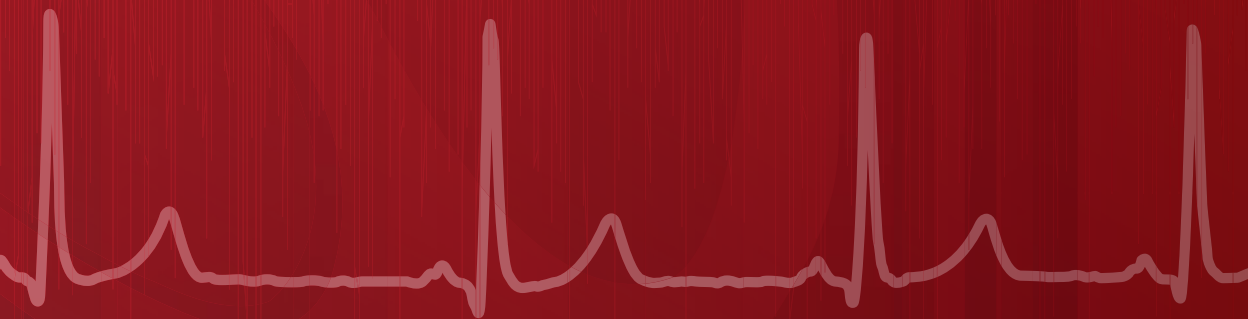




Dr. Sinatra's

TOP 20

From nutrients to recipes, 20 lists of
Dr. Sinatra's best heart health advice
from the past two decades



Stephen Sinatra M.D.



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

When I started writing and sharing my health advice 20 years ago, I had no idea how long it would last or what it would grow into. I was a relatively unknown doctor with three teenage kids and a busy practice in Manchester, Connecticut, when I was approached by someone from a company then called Phillips Publishing. Would I like to join their team of alternative health experts, they asked, and have what I was doing with integrative cardiology published on a large scale?



I said yes, and what an amazing journey it's been.

In this, my 20th year in partnership with them, I'd like to say a special thank you to my editors, business managers, and everyone at what is now called Healthy Directions, for the continued opportunity to do what I love. But most of all, I'd like to thank you, my readers, for your loyalty and trust. The people who've come to me with their health problems over the years, not professors or researchers, have been my most important teachers. Without you, I would know science, but I wouldn't know how truly to be a doctor.

Also in celebration of 20 years, I've put together this book of my best and most often shared advice. It's a bit different than anything I've done in the past; it's a book of lists. Straight-to-the-point, know-it-now information. I hope you find it a useful resource that earns a permanent spot on your bookshelf.

Thank you again. And here's to the next 20 years!

From my heart to yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Sinatra M.D." in a cursive script.

Stephen Sinatra, M.D.

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The 3 Most Important Things to Know if You've Been Diagnosed With a Heart Issue

Whether it happens as the result of a routine blood test or a cardiac event, coming to terms with the fact that you have heart disease is a highly emotional process. Many people respond with fear, wondering what it means for their futures. Others lash out in anger or slip into depression over the limitations they think their conditions will have on their lives. And virtually everyone, at some point, feels confused about how to make the lifestyle changes recommended for recovery and vitality.

No matter where you may be on that journey—whether you've just come out of the doctor's office or you've been living with heart disease for 20 years—I strongly urge you to open yourself to the following ideas. They will make the process of healing easier and more effective.

1. A diagnosis of cardiovascular disease is not a death sentence; it's a second chance at life.

If you've recently found out that you have heart disease, you may be thinking that your luck has run out and that it's all downhill from here. It's not; in fact, the opposite is true. One of the harshest facts about cardiovascular disease is that in roughly half of cases, the first sign of this disease is sudden death. So if you're reading this book, you've been given a tremendous blessing and opportunity to change the way in which you take care of yourself, so you can live a longer and happier life. And trust me—you will live well if you make the right choices.

2. Be open to helping yourself heal, and set an intention to be well.

Some people may express skepticism at this idea, but our thoughts exert tremendous power over our lives even when we are not conscious of them. Granted, with cardiovascular disease, you cannot “think your way to healthy.” It requires consistent effort and discipline. But if you set an intention to heal and put 100 percent of your energy into that thought, you'll find that it becomes much easier to make necessary adjustments to your lifestyle.

3. Educate yourself about your condition and the options for treating it.

These include not only the physical aspects of what's happening in your body, but also diet, exercise recommendations, and the many conventional and alternative therapies available. By reading this book, you're already taking steps toward better understanding.

THE HEALING POWER OF OPTIMISM

For years, I've written about the healing power of the mind. Our emotions definitely have a profound impact on our health.

How can you harness the healing power of optimism?

- **Look for the silver lining.** Almost every situation has a bright side, if you're willing to step back and force yourself to look for the good.
- **Count your blessings.** Remembering all of the good things in your life helps you to focus on the positive.
- **Keep a journal.** Each night before you go to bed, write down at least one good thing that happened during the day. On days that were especially tough, you can re-read all of the positive events in your life.
- **Reach out to others.** Connecting with other people helps us all to gain a better perspective on our own lives.

My 6 Pillars of Good Heart Health

I recommend that everyone live by the following 6 healthy heart tips, regardless of age or health status. These principles are specifically targeted to combat the core cause of heart disease: low-grade inflammation in the body. Research has confirmed that internal inflammation leads to a weakening and rupture of arterial plaques, which, in turn, causes heart attacks and strokes. This is why more than half of the people who have heart attacks and strokes have normal cholesterol levels.

1. The PAM diet

I'm a big believer in what I call the Pan-Asian Mediterranean (PAM) diet—a combination of the diet followed by the people on the Greek island of Crete (also known as the Mediterranean diet) and a diet common among people living on the Asian side of the Pacific Rim. The Cretan, or Mediterranean, diet is a primitive diet of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fresh fish, various kinds of beans, monounsaturated olive oil, and sauces occasionally flavored with some lamb, turkey, or chicken. The diet favored around the Pacific Rim is bountiful with fish, fresh vegetables and fruits, locally harvested seaweeds, and soy products. What makes both of these diets so beneficial to heart health is that they are rich in omega-3 fats, which help curb inflammation.

2. Targeted nutritional supplements

For optimal heart health—as well as general overall health—I recommend fortifying your diet with a few core nutritional supplements, then adding supplements based on your specific health needs. I specifically recommend the “Awesome Foursome.” That’s my name for the four supplements I believe are most crucial for energy production inside cells—coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), L-carnitine, D-ribose, and magnesium. This is particularly important in the heart because the heart requires more energy than any other organ in the body. The more energy it can produce, the more efficient it will be.

3. Regular exercise

No other healthy heart tip has such an immediate and long-lasting impact on your heart health and general well-being as regular exercise. Even simple exercises strengthen your heart and circulatory system, build stamina, and improve your state of mind. Best of all, you don't have to lift heavy weights or spend hours at the gym to have a healthy heart and body.

4. Mind-body balance

The proper connection between the mind and body is an aspect of heart health that's often overlooked and even dismissed. Far too many people, including doctors, fail to see a relationship between physical feelings and emotions. I'm here to tell you that this connection is real, and it's an important part of wellness. I can't emphasize enough how

important it is that you defuse stress, nurture a positive attitude, express your emotions, foster happiness, encourage laughter, and seek spiritual peace in order to have a healthy heart. That's why regularly practicing stress-reduction techniques is crucial to maintaining the ideal mind-body balance that promotes optimal heart health.

5. Detoxification

No matter how closely we manage our health, we can't escape the fact that we live in a toxic world. Our immune systems are under constant siege, working 24/7 to destroy the impurities in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the chemicals we apply to our skin. These toxins have been associated with all kinds of health conditions—including heart disease.

6. Earthing

Also known as grounding, Earthing is the practice of physically reconnecting with the Earth either by going barefoot outside or by sitting or lying on special conductive devices (such as pads for the floor or bed) that are plugged into a grounded electrical outlet. Both actions allow the free electrons of the Earth's surface to enter the body, where they synchronize all of your bioelectrical systems and powerfully reduce inflammation—the real cause of arterial disease. I've been involved in some ongoing Earthing research, including an investigation into how it alters the electrical “charge” of your blood and improves its flow and viscosity. Other studies have shown that Earthing can help to balance an overactive sympathetic nervous system.

THE MANY HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- Keeps your heart healthy
- Lowers your blood pressure and triglyceride levels
- Helps to raise HDL cholesterol levels
- Reduces your risk of cancer and stroke
- Improves arthritis symptoms
- Helps you slim down
- Boosts your mood
- Helps to lower your blood sugar
- Ages you more gracefully
- Helps you sleep like a baby



The 15 Most Important Heart Health Numbers You Should Keep Track Of

Blood work is one of the best windows into what is happening in the body. Hundreds of different things can be measured by looking at blood, but, unfortunately, many doctors still focus on the wrong ones when it comes to heart health. Cholesterol is the best example of this. Though I believe thinking is beginning to change on this topic, too many patients still have their cardiovascular health judged and treated according to total cholesterol and LDL levels.

Twenty years ago, I, too, gave cholesterol more credence than it deserved. But practice and research have shown me that other factors provide an infinitely more accurate and comprehensive picture of heart health. Here they are, along with the ranges that I consider healthy:

1. Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)

One of my “Awesome Foursome” nutrients, CoQ10 functions as both an antioxidant and a catalyst for the production and use of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) in cellular mitochondria. Our bodies produce CoQ10 naturally; however, levels begin dropping around age 40. This is not a common blood test (you’ll probably have to specifically request your doctor order it), but it

will reveal whether your cells have enough of this nutrient to function at their best. **My target zone for a healthy heart: 1.0–1.8 ug/mL**

Aim to reach or improve your CoQ10 blood levels to the following ranges **when these medical conditions are present:**

- 2.0–2.5 ug/mL if you have high blood pressure, mitral valve prolapse (MVP), arrhythmia, diabetes, or periodontal disease
- 2.5–3.5 ug/mL if you have mild to moderate congestive heart failure (CHF), chronic fatigue syndrome, or angina
- 3.5 ug/mL if you have severe CHF or are waiting for a heart transplant

2. C-Reactive Protein (CRP)

C-reactive protein is a marker for inflammation and is directly associated with atherosclerotic plaque. Multiple studies have identified CRP as a potent predictor of cardiovascular events, and one that is far more reliable than elevated cholesterol levels. When testing CRP, make sure your doctor uses the high-sensitivity test (hs-CRP). **My target zone: <0.8 mg/dL**

3. Serum Ferritin

This test is a measure of your iron levels. Though iron is necessary for stimulating the production of hemoglobin, the red blood cell pigment that carries oxygen to our cells, too much of it can contribute to cardiovascular disease risk. One study found that people with excessive levels of ferritin were more than twice as likely to have heart attacks, and that every 1 percent increase in ferritin translated into a 4 percent increase in

heart attack risk. Excessive levels of ferritin are one reason why postmenopausal women are at greater risk for heart attack than women who are still menstruating and losing blood each month. **My target zone: Women <80 ug/L; Men <90 ug/L**

4. Fibrinogen

Fibrinogen is a protein that influences the ability of your blood to clot. When fibrinogen levels are too low, blood won’t clot; when they are too high, the opposite is true. In fact, a high fibrinogen level can cause the abrupt formation of a coronary thrombosis—the old-fashioned diagnosis we used to write down for a heart attack.

The tendency toward a high fibrinogen level can be a genetic trait, so you must check this factor if you have a family history of cardiovascular disease. Women who smoke, take oral contraceptives, or are postmenopausal usually have higher fibrinogen levels and should also have this test done. **My target zone: 180–350 mg/dL**

5. Homocysteine

Homocysteine is an amino acid produced by the body when it cannot effectively break down methionine, a component of protein. Some homocysteine is normal, but an excess causes your body to lay down sticky, artery-hardening platelets in blood vessels. Some research shows that 42 percent of strokes, 28 percent of peripheral vascular disease, and approximately 30 percent of premature cardiovascular disease are directly related to excessive levels of homocysteine.

If you’ve had a heart attack or other cardiovascular event, ask your doctor to test your homocysteine levels. Also, if you take drugs that tend to elevate homocysteine—theophylline (for asthma), methotrexate (for cancer or arthritis), or L-dopa (for Parkinson’s)—you should be tested. **My target zone: 7–10 umol/L**

(continued...)

“These tests help to determine your overall heart health risk and to identify problems in need of intervention. Just be sure to tell your doctor that you want them tested before you have your blood drawn, because he or she may need to order additional tests. Not all of them are part of traditional lipid panels.”

Stephen Sinatra M.D.

The 15 Most Important Heart Health Numbers You Should Keep Track Of

6. Lp(a)

Lp(a), short for Lipoprotein(a), is a specific type of LDL cholesterol particle that can cause inflammation and clogging of blood vessels. Under normal circumstances, Lp(a) is a highly effective repair molecule in your artery walls. But when Lp(a) is elevated, it becomes one of the most dangerous risk factors for atherosclerosis and heart attack. That's why I consider Lp(a) to be a significant indicator of cardiovascular health and the most important form of cholesterol to monitor. Unfortunately, the amount of Lp(a) in your blood is entirely hereditary, so it is difficult to control. **My target zone: <30 mg/dL (Standard blood test) <10 mg/dL (VAP test)**

7. HDL

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is one of the proteins that manage the movement of cholesterol through the body. It is often referred to as "good" because its job is to scavenge excess cholesterol molecules and transport them back to the liver for recycling or removal. Low HDL is common in coronary artery disease. **My target zone: >35 mg/dL**

8. LDL

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is another protein that manages the movement of cholesterol. Traditionally, it has been referred to as "bad," but that is misleading. Cholesterol is a vital material needed to repair damage inside arteries and blood vessels, and it is essential for the production of vitamin D and many hormones. LDL is simply the vehicle that takes cholesterol to the locations where it's needed.

There are two things to remember with regard to LDL: (1) LDL is dangerous only when it becomes oxidized, and (2) how much LDL you have is far less important than your dominant particle pattern. That is, are your LDL particles small and dense or light and fluffy? Small, dense LDL is more inflammatory and must be managed more closely. A cholesterol fractionation test can reveal which pattern you favor. **My target zone: 80–140 mg/dL; also test for the prevailing particle pattern**

9. Triglycerides

Triglycerides are fatty-particle components that tend to be deposited and stored in body fat (think "love handles"). A high triglyceride level is more dangerous for women than for men, so if you are a woman and your triglycerides are elevated (above 200 mg/dL), put some effort into lowering them—especially if you are a diabetic. If you are a diabetic woman who also has high triglycerides, your risk of developing heart disease increases to 200 times normal. **My target zone: <100 mg/dL**

10. Triglyceride/HDL Ratio

We used to look closely at the ratio of LDL/HDL, but that is outdated. I now believe it's far more important to look at your HDL number in relation to your triglyceride level. Ideally, you want to achieve no more than a two-to-one ratio of triglycerides to HDL cholesterol. For example, if your triglycerides are 100 mg/dl, you want your HDL cholesterol to be 50 mg/dl. I don't like to see a ratio that's greater than five. **My target zone: <3.5**

11. AA/EPA Ratio

This test measures your ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids by comparing the levels of arachidonic acid (AA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). If the ratio is too high, there's not enough anti-inflammatory EPA in the body to neutralize the pro-inflammatory AA. **My target zone: 1.5–3.0**

12. Fasting Blood Sugar

The fasting blood sugar test measures how much glucose is in your blood at the time of collection. It can be an early warning sign that your body is developing insulin resistance, which is a precursor to diabetes and a cardiovascular risk factor. **My target zone: <90 mg/dL**

13. Fasting Insulin

Similar to the fasting blood sugar test, this test measures how much insulin is in your blood at the time of collection. Insulin can have an inflammatory effect on the cardiovascular system, and elevated insulin levels may be a sign of insulin resistance. **My target zone: <17 uU/mL**

14. Hemoglobin A1C

I recommend having an HbA1C test and a fasting insulin test to determine your level of insulin sensitivity. Both of these tests measure how much glucose is in your blood, but the HbA1C test measures the average amount of glucose in your blood over the previous several weeks. Together, the tests provide the most comprehensive picture of your blood sugar and insulin sensitivity. **My target zone: <6 percent of total HGB**

15. TSH

This test helps determine if your thyroid is working properly. **My target zone: 0.5–1.5**

A NOTE ABOUT TOTAL CHOLESTEROL

While I no longer believe that total cholesterol has any meaningful impact on heart health, I still watch it to make sure that it doesn't fall too low or rise exceptionally high. When cholesterol levels fall too low, particularly LDL cholesterol, it can have a negative impact on memory, immune health, and hormone production.



The 5 Best Anti-Inflammatory Nutrients

In the last few years, the relationship between inflammation and heart disease has made it onto the covers of *Newsweek* and *Time*. The conventional medical establishment is finally catching up to the fact that inflammation, not cholesterol, is the real culprit in heart disease. As many of you know, I've been saying that for years—reporting on this important connection in my newsletter as early as July 1999.

While this is certainly good news, one of the “side effects” of this newfound wisdom is that drug companies are now touting the anti-inflammatory effects of statin drugs as a new reason to take them. In fact, in February of 2010, the FDA approved the use of statin drugs for patients who have normal cholesterol levels but other risk factors for heart disease—especially inflammation.

While it is true that statin drugs have an anti-inflammatory effect, and can be beneficial for some high-risk patients—especially middle-aged men with coronary artery disease—they're not the answer to heart disease.

Statins carry a lot of baggage. Patients taking statin drugs have developed muscular weakness, dementia, and memory loss as severe as total global amnesia (where the person can't even remember who they are). Women who take statin drugs also have an increased risk of breast cancer.

There are safer ways to reduce inflammation, including making lifestyle changes such as getting more exercise and losing weight. The compounds that create inflammation live in fat cells, so the more fat you get rid of, the lower your inflammation level.

There are also 5 nutrients that act as natural anti-inflammatories, including:

- 1 **Omega-3 Essential fatty acids**
- 2 **Turmeric**
- 3 **Delta tocotrienol (a form of vitamin E)**
- 4 ***Ecklonia cava* (a form of seaweed)**
- 5 **Resveratrol**

THE MANY HEALTH BENEFITS OF RESVERATROL

There have been more than 4,400 studies on the benefits of resveratrol to date, showing that it helps to protect your entire body, including:

- Protecting the endothelial lining of your arteries—so blood flows as it should.
- Reducing oxidative stress, which prevents premature aging of cells.
- Blocking the production of NF-kappa B, a powerful, noxious inflammatory agent.
- Cellular support that improves mental function and promotes oral/dental health.
- Cancer suppression vis-à-vis preventing cancer cell replication and enhancing cancer cell death in a variety of laboratory cell culture studies.
- Muscle health, by reducing muscle wasting associated with diabetes and cancer.

My Top 10 Must-Know Facts About Cholesterol

5

1. Cholesterol is a raw material made by your liver, brain, and almost every cell in your body.

Enzymes convert it into vitamin D, bile salts needed for digesting and absorbing fats, and steroid hormones (including the sex hormones estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone, as well as stress hormones). Cholesterol is a major part of the membranes that surround cells and the structures within them.

2. The body makes cholesterol as needed.

When you eat more in your diet, the body makes less. If you eat less, the body makes more. On average, 90 percent of blood cholesterol is made in the body, and the rest comes from food.

3. You can have different levels of cholesterol at different times of the day.

4. Cholesterol tends to go up in the winter and down in the summer.

5. Cholesterol soars after any surgery.

It also increases when you have an infection, mental stress, or have suffered a heart attack. The reason for this is that cholesterol is a healing agent needed to help create new cells, and it's produced whenever healing is required. Your cholesterol level will also rise and fall depending on exposure to environmental agents and toxins.

6. If the cause is successfully addressed, cholesterol levels often come down.

Too often when a doctor finds a high level of cholesterol, he or she reaches for the prescription pad instead of looking for the reason the cholesterol is high. If the cause is successfully addressed, cholesterol levels often come down. Identifying and addressing the cause of high cholesterol is always preferable to taking medications for it.

7. The herbs, antioxidants, and nutraceuticals that reduce cholesterol do so by neutralizing oxidation or the damaging agents.

Thus, the liver doesn't have to produce as much cholesterol. Moreover, the supplements support other biochemical processes necessary to heal wounds.

8. The endothelium is the razor-thin lining of blood vessels.

The damaging agents we are exposed to—toxic chemicals, pathogens, free radicals, and inflammatory substances—wind up in our bloodstream and damage this thin layer of cells. When this happens, the liver sends LDL to the site to make repairs. As the healing process concludes, the spent LDL particles are carried back to the liver by HDL and removed from the bloodstream.

9. The brain is particularly rich in cholesterol and accounts for about one-quarter of all the cholesterol we have.

About 20 percent of the fatty myelin sheath that coats every nerve cell and fiber is made of cholesterol, and neuron function depends on it. It's not surprising that a connection has been found between naturally occurring cholesterol and mental function, and that lower cholesterol levels are linked to poorer cognitive performance.

10. Some research suggests that doctors should be extremely cautious about prescribing statin drugs to the elderly.

This is particularly true of those who are frail. I have seen frail individuals become even weaker and more prone to infections after taking these medications. Many of these patients later told me that their strength, energy, appetite, and vitality returned when they discontinued the statins. These folks clearly need their cholesterol—as do the very young.

“Cholesterol levels are a poor predictor of heart attacks. Only about 50 percent of heart attack victims have high cholesterol levels, and 50 percent of people who have high cholesterol do not have heart disease.”

Stephen Sinatra M.D.



The 5 Common (and Seemingly Unrelated) Problems That Increase Your Heart Risk

If you have heart disease or risk factors for it, it's not enough that you treat your disease. You must focus on your overall health, as well. There are a number of conditions that don't seem on the surface to have much of a relationship with heart disease at all, yet can significantly increase your risk. Here are 5 of them:

1. Erectile dysfunction

An international group of researchers has shown that the combination of erectile dysfunction (ED) and cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a strong and independent predictor of death and negative cardiovascular outcomes. Their study found that those who had both CVD and ED were 1.6 times more likely to experience cardiovascular death, heart attack, stroke, and hospitalization due to heart failure.

Any man who sees a physician with complaints of ED should also get a full cardiovascular workup. Vascular disease is not limited to the coronary arteries; it can also show up in the legs, the brain, and even the penis. ED can result from the same kind of endothelial damage and dysfunction that occurs in atherosclerosis and the plaque build-up that precedes heart attack and stroke. ED is a marker of endothelial dysfunction, the cardinal kingpin of inflammation and cardiovascular disease.

2. Sleep apnea

People who have this breathing disorder experience multiple episodes throughout the night in which breathing stops for anywhere from a few seconds to up to a minute. The result is less oxygen in the blood and arousal from sleep, which leads apnea sufferers to wake up feeling unrefreshed and to have trouble staying awake during the day. Research has also found that sleep apnea is particularly risky for people with CVD. "Obstructive sleep apnea," the researchers said, "is a strong predictor of fatal... events in patients with CVD."

In a related study, cardiac researchers in Montreal performed three-dimensional ultrasound scans of arteries in 19 overweight patients with sleep apnea and stable coronary artery disease. They found a significant relationship between the frequency of apnea episodes and the volume of atherosclerotic plaque. The higher the number of sleep disturbances, the larger the amount of plaque.

3. Depression

The known connection between heart disease and depression is so strong that a history of major depression is considered a powerful independent predictor of future cardiac events. Negative emotional states, such as depression, set off a cascade of hormones that have profound impacts on the body. Depression, for example, has been associated with the following:

- Higher resting heart rate
- Impaired vagal tone (vagal tone is a nervous system response that affects an individual's ability to soothe him- or herself; those with better levels of vagal tone tend to function better)
- Elevated norepinephrine levels (norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter that mediates chemical communication in the sympathetic nervous system)
- Lowered heart rate variability (the more readily your heart rate varies, the better off you are)

Making matters worse, people who are anxious, angry, frustrated, sad, lonely, or depressed are more likely to have poor health habits, such as smoking, overeating, avoiding exercise, using drugs and alcohol, and other poor self-care patterns, to try to balance their emotions.

(continued...)

3 FOODS FOR DEPRESSION

1. **Range-free or DHA-rich eggs:** Eggs contain all the basic amino acids necessary to produce essential neurotransmitters, including serotonin. They are also rich in sulfur and magnesium, both good for your heart.
2. **Protein** stimulates steady production of tryptophan, a building block of serotonin.
3. **Essential fatty acids** are particularly important for proper brain function. Prime sources are fish and flax. Eat two to three fish meals per week, use 1 tablespoon flax oil, or take in a tablespoon or two of ground flaxseed on a regular basis.

The 5 Common (and Seemingly Unrelated) Problems That Increase Your Heart Risk

4. Irritable bowel

The idea that heart and bowel health are connected is neither new nor particularly unusual. Autopsies often reveal colons that are up to 80 percent clogged with waste material. The inflammation and toxicity associated with bloating, abdominal pain, diverticulitis, inflammatory bowel disease, colon cancer, and other colon ailments can spill into the rest of the body and affect many organs, including the heart. Before World War I, 57 leading British physicians gathered at the Royal Society of Medicine in London to discuss this systemic poisoning that they called “alimentary toxemia.” John Harvey Kellogg, MD, a pioneer of nutritional medicine in the United States and the man who created Corn Flakes, reported in his 1915 book on colonic hygiene that these doctors made a clear connection between colon dysfunction and the cardiovascular system. They cited “degeneration and weakening of the heart muscle, fatty degeneration of the heart, low blood pressure, high blood pressure, enlargement of the heart, dilation of the aorta, and arteriosclerosis.” In fact, one of the doctors was quoted as saying that “there are [only] a

few phases of cardiovascular trouble (disease of heart and blood vessels) with which disorder of some part of the alimentary tract is not causatively associated.”

I agree, a toxic bowel can create insidious inflammation that can adversely affect the heart.

5. Vital exhaustion

Vital exhaustion (VE) is a condition in which you are literally stressed to the point of exhaustion. It is characterized by lack of energy, increased irritability, and feelings of being overwhelmed, dejected, or defeated, as well as being at increased risk for cardiac events. Much of the increased risk from VE has to do with hormones, especially those created by the pituitary and adrenal glands. You might have heard the term “adrenal exhaustion.” It describes a condition where the immune system has been overwhelmed so many times that it’s barely up and running. The problem is that when your immune system is down, your heart is more likely to be struggling too. VE also correlates with increased blood coagulability, or stickiness, which can be a harbinger of clots, heart attack, and stroke.

Honorable mention: Periodontal disease

For many years, studies have suggested a link between the bacteria that cause gum disease and inflammation that can affect the heart—and I’ve been a proponent of that message. However, the American Heart Association recently came out with a statement refuting this long-held belief.

The study’s lead author said that preventive periodontal treatment will not help cut the risk of heart disease and stroke as much as treating known causes of heart disease, such as smoking, diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol.

While I agree that those wanting to reduce their risk of heart disease should focus on addressing known risk factors for heart disease, I still believe it is important to pay attention to dental care. Both periodontal disease and heart disease are caused by inflammation, and there are common mechanisms of action and benefits to be gained by keeping all of the inflammation in your body under control.



HELP FOR AN IRRITABLE BOWEL

A study out of the University of Helsinki showed that patients with irritable bowel syndrome who took probiotics had a marked reduction in their symptoms—particularly distension and abdominal pain. Additional experiments are exploring the most effective combinations of bacterial strains to counteract declining immune function in the elderly.

Beneficial bacteria like those found in probiotic supplements are rich in fermented foods, such as yogurt, kimchi, tempeh, and sauerkraut. The best probiotic supplement strain I’ve found is *Lactobacillus plantarum* 299V (Lp299v). In addition to comforting your irritable bowel and improving digestion, it supports normal cholesterol and healthy blood pressure.

The 15 Most Dangerous Toxins to the Heart

Though distasteful to think about, we live in a sea of chemicals that have a significant impact on our health. Endocrine disorders and chronic inflammation are just two of the conditions influenced by the unnatural particles (and even some natural ones) in the air we breathe, food we eat, beverages we drink, and products we use on a regular basis.

Although we lack the individual ability to eliminate toxins from the environment or to monitor their levels in our daily lives, it is within our control to minimize or avoid exposure. Here are the most obvious dangers to avoid:



1. Insecticides and pesticides

They are a major contributor to Parkinson's disease.

2. Pharmaceutical drugs

They deplete the body of nutrients and energy. For example, statins deplete coenzyme Q10 and diuretics deplete precious potassium and magnesium.

3. Alcohol

Overindulgence ages the body.

4. High fructose corn syrup

This sweetener is added to thousands of processed food items and is particularly prominent in soft drinks. It promotes inflammation, obesity, and liver dysfunction.

5. Mold

It grows in dark, damp places and can cause severe allergic reactions. The Energy Star website, a government-funded resource, offers good tips for mold control. Go to www.energystar.gov and search "mold."

6. Cigarettes

Each puff contains thousands of compounds you don't want in your body. Smoking is a major killer.

7. Soft drinks

These drinks contain too much sugar and artificial sweeteners that cause inflammation, plus phosphoric acid that leaches calcium out of bones.

8. Trans fats

These unnatural fats have been removed from many foods, but they still bear watching out for. Because trans fats promote inflammation and oxidative stress in the body, avoid consuming, or cooking with, anything containing fats that are hydrogenated.

9. Chlorine

Although this chemical is used to disinfect most public water supplies, it reacts with naturally occurring elements in water to form toxins called trihalomethanes. These have been linked with asthma, cancer, and heart disease. Chlorine has also been shown to interfere with thyroid function. Limit your time in chlorinated pools or spas, as chlorine is absorbed through the skin, and shower immediately after exposure. If your tap water tastes bad (potentially from too much chlorine), opt for spring water in glass bottles. I like the brands Acqua Panna and Voss.

(continued...)

KICKING THE SMOKING HABIT

When it comes to smoking, I believe that biting the bullet and just saying "no" is the best way out. To get started, I suggest you prepare to quit one week ahead of time. Here are a few tips to help you lay the groundwork:

- Remove all smoking-related items from your house, car and office.
- Only smoke outside!
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in your house, car, or office.
- Start a daily exercise program.
- Tell everyone you know you are quitting.
- Consider quitting during a break from your usual routine (vacation/over the weekend).
- Buy a low-tar nicotine cigarette to help wean you off more addictive cigarettes.
- Talk to your doctor about low-nicotine patches. My patients have had success with patches. But please don't smoke while using these patches.

The 15 Most Dangerous Toxins to the Heart

10. Perfumes, cosmetics, and aluminum-containing deodorants

Perfumes and cosmetics contain all kinds of chemicals that are absorbed into the body. Use essential oils instead of perfumes, and make sure your cosmetics are made with natural and organic ingredients. The aluminum in deodorants may cause inflammation in the armpits and may contribute to breast cancer.

11. Xenoestrogens

These man-made chemicals, which are used in many common everyday products, have estrogenic properties and can affect sex hormone activity. They may also increase the risk of hormone-sensitive cancers, such as breast, uterine, or prostate cancer. Common sources of xenoestrogens include pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, polycarbonate plastic bottles (including those used for drinking water), and food containers. Do not microwave any food with wrapping or containers made with plastic. Better yet, don't microwave at all.

12. Processed meats such as baloney, ham, and especially hot dogs

They contain nitrites, which, in addition to being preservatives, are toxic to the GI tract and contribute to the formation of cancer.

13. Heavy metals, such as mercury and lead

Big ocean fish—think tile fish, shark, tuna, and swordfish—have the highest mercury content. Limit your fish consumption to smaller species such as Atlantic halibut, Spanish mackerel, scrod, and wild salmon. When eating tuna, opt for light chunk tuna, not albacore, and make sure it's packed in water. Avoid fresh-water fish altogether. Also, limit your consumption of farm-raised fish which tends to have higher mercury levels than wild-caught fish.

14. Radon

This odorless, invisible gas seeps from the ground into houses through cracks in foundations, and it poses a real health danger. Radon toxicity is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. One out of 15 homes in the country may have elevated radon levels, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

15. Vaccinations

Thimerosal, a preservative that contains mercury, has been used in many vaccines since the 1930s. Although the FDA says it's working with vaccine manufacturers to reduce or eliminate the compound, particularly in childhood vaccines, it's worth asking your doctor whether any potential injections will come with a dollop of heavy metal. The amount of mercury may be miniscule, but over time even the smallest amounts can accumulate to problematic levels. When young infants are given vaccinations and exposed to electromagnetic fields, Wi-Fi, and microwaves, which can open up the blood-brain barrier, toxic reactions can occur in the brain.

BEWARE OF THE "DIRTIEST FOODS"

Some fruits and vegetables are more prone to have high concentrations of pesticides than others. Strawberries and raisins, for example, probably have the highest concentration of pesticides because they grow so close to the ground.

Other fruits and vegetables likely to be pesticide ridden include peaches, apples, peppers, celery, nectarines, cherries, pears, grapes, spinach, green beans, and winter squash. It is therefore most important to buy these items from organic sources whenever possible.



The Top 15 Ways to Address the Emotional Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Early in my career, as part of my effort to understand how our emotions affect heart health, I trained as a psychotherapist. I discovered then that our heart is indeed much more than a pump.

We all know the sayings, “you touched my heart,” “you stole my heart,” and “my heart is broken.” The heart is the only organ in the body that carries such emotionally charged meaning. But more importantly, they are not just images; they can describe real, physical, medical events in the heart. The “heavy heart” that comes with sadness, for example, can actually lead to chest pain.

Our emotions and our stresses are far bigger risk factors than we acknowledge them to be. When stressed, the body floods itself with the hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Over time, an overdose of these hormones can lead to symptoms like heart palpitations, ulcers, stroke, or heart attack. So although we may tell ourselves that we are not as upset as we think we are, our emotions show themselves in other ways.

Simply put, the body never lies.

Do not neglect the emotional component of your disease. Here are some of my favorite ways to resolve and cope with repressed feelings and stress:

1. Exploring your anger

Anger is the Achilles’ heel of the cardiovascular system—a trigger for serious problems, including a heart attack. Your blood vessels constrict and your blood pressure rises. The electrical currents to your heart become unstable. And if you have arterial plaque, anger is like throwing a match into a can of gasoline. The plaque can rupture, and the resulting clots can kill you.

One of the best ways to cope with anger is to release it. Find a place of solitude and scream, yell, or cry. Talk to a friend or visit a skilled psychotherapist to work on your anger. Or, try twisting towels, hitting tennis balls, or punching pillows. It also helps to ask yourself why you feel angry. Recognize that you cannot be effective when you are possessed by anger. If you understand why you’re coming to such an emotional point, you’ll be better able to identify and avoid those triggers.

2. Crying

Crying is one of the most healing things we can do because it allows us to express emotions to alleviate distress, and to discharge the effects of sadness and anger from our bodies. Crying actually produces chemicals called endorphins, which lower your stress level, and sobbing enhances healthy breathing. That’s why we feel relieved after a good cry. A good cry literally lightens our hearts and prevents heartbreak that can lead to heart disease.

3. Mental imaging

The relationship between mental imagery, relaxation, physiological responses, and behavior has been documented in many scientific studies. A technique called relaxation with guided imaging (RGI), for example, has been shown to lower symptoms of rapid heartbeat, breathing difficulties, and jaw clenching.

To do this in your daily life, simply imagine that you are experiencing something, and allow your body to react as if the event you’re imagining is actually happening. I like to concentrate on a past moment of intense joy. When faced with a stressful moment, visualize a time when you felt out-of-this-world happy. This could be the birth of a child, an engagement or marriage, or being recognized for an accomplishment. The key is to choose an event that brings up positive feelings. Then put yourself back in that moment—feel it, smell it, taste it, and live it all over again. The positive emotions you feel will effectively cancel out the negative ones caused by the stressful situation.

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“Our emotions and our stresses are far bigger risk factors than we acknowledge them to be.”

Stephen Sinatra M.D.

The Top 15 Ways to Address the Emotional Risk Factors for Heart Disease

4. Music

The melody, pitch, timing, and beat of certain music—particularly classical and baroque (including “Pachelbel’s Canon” and “Chant” by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos)—can quiet your mind. The connection is simple: Most scores of classical music range between 60 and 140 beats per minute. The resting heart beats approximately 50 to 80 times per minute—so it would appear that soothing scores in this range induce calm. For relaxation, try listening to the following pieces of music:

- Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, second movement
- Bach: Orchestral Suite No. 2, Sarabande
- Holst: The Planets Suite, “Venus”
- Ravel: Mother Goose Suite, first movement

The healing power of music also comes from its ability to stimulate the right side of the brain, which thinks in images. I believe this creative, intuitive part of the brain needs to be exercised if healing is to truly take place.

5. Reiki

This ancient energy therapy (pronounced “ray-key”) is based on the belief that universal life energy is present in all beings, and that the energy field unique to each individual permeates the body and extends outward by several inches, in what is called an “aura.” In a Reiki session, a trained practitioner places his or her hands near the body to engage this energy field. Clients remain fully clothed, in a reclining or seated

position. The practitioner carefully moves his or her hands over different parts of the client’s body to concentrate the flow of energy in various areas. This movement of energy can promote general well-being, address specific emotional states, or help treat health conditions.

6. Yoga

When practiced regularly and on a long-term basis, yoga can help lower blood pressure and other risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Studies of hypertensive adults with and without coronary disease have shown that yoga-based interventions can reduce the need for medication. Yoga also does not require an enormous time commitment: Just 30 minutes of yoga daily have been shown to decrease blood pressure.

7. Tai chi

Originally a noncompetitive form of self-defense, tai chi has been referred to as “meditation in motion.” It consists of a series of postures and movements that are performed slowly and gracefully, along with breathing techniques that induce a state of relaxation and tranquility. If done regularly, tai chi can reduce stress as well as improve flexibility, strength, and energy. In one study of 76 healthy people who had high-normal blood pressure or stage 1 hypertension, tai chi was shown to decrease blood pressure and anxiety after the participants had practiced it for 50 minutes, three times a week for 12 weeks.

8. Massage

This form of bodywork helps people decrease their heart rate and blood pressure and reduce the stress that can lead to cardiovascular disease. Research confirms the many benefits of massage, including simple stress relief, release of endorphins (which offset pain), and enhanced immune function.

9. Meditation

Simple meditation can offset the chronic release of cortisol. You can do a simple meditation by focusing on a phrase that is meaningful to you, such as “The Lord is my shepherd,” “Hail Mary, full of grace,” “Shalom,” or “Om.” Just close your eyes and say your phrase silently as you exhale. When stray thoughts come into your mind, don’t try to force them out. Gently, and without straining, bring your focus back to your phrase. Use this technique for 10–15 minutes, once or twice daily, or as needed.

You can also try Transcendental Meditation (TM). A friend of mine started practicing TM 30 years ago after developing work-related high blood pressure. Within a month, his pressure had normalized. Thirty years later, he still meditates regularly and his blood pressure is a youthful 120/60. Dozens of published studies have shown that TM has a powerful effect on the heart and overall health. TM has also been found to significantly improve heart rate variability as well.

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MAKE SURE YOU GET PLENTY OF REST

This age-old doctor’s recommendation goes straight to the heart of the issue. When you become fatigued, it’s easy to become stressed. Rest includes not only your daily sleep, but adequate relaxation and vacations. I remember years ago reading a study that showed people who took more vacations lived longer.

The Top 15 Ways to Address the Emotional Risk Factors for Heart Disease

10. Prayer

Spiritual practices lower stress—no doubt about it. In a conference at Harvard Medical School several years ago, research was cited showing that people who attend church frequently, or pray regularly, have lower rates of heart disease, hypertension, and suicide. Those who prayed even lived longer than those who did not. When you include prayer in your daily life, you may become more open to life, less rigid, and more centered. You may find it easier to resolve your problems and cope with stressful situations.

11. Learn to say “no”

Always accommodating others is a wonderful trait; however, we can easily become overwhelmed and fatigued in the process. Say “no” when confronted by a request you think will probably be too stressful or time-consuming. You can’t always please everybody. Moreover, no one will respect you unless you respect yourself and your personal time.

12. Pets

Research confirms what you’ve probably known all along: Animals—especially those with which you’ve had a long-term relationship—can be good for your health! The survival rate of people who suffer a heart attack has been found to be five times greater among those who leave the hospital and go home to a loving pet than those who go home to an empty house or a judgmental spouse!

There’s no doubt about it, our animal friends can literally open our hearts. Here are some of the lessons we can learn from them:

- **Appreciation.** Pets not only bring tranquil and playful energy to a space, they can teach us to be more relaxed and in tune with our bodies. Just look at how animals start their day. Do birds ever wake up grumpy? No, they chirp to the light of a new dawn!
- **Relaxation.** Have you ever watched your cat arch his back? Some yoga postures mimic this stretch. Stretching, which involves deep breathing, is a great form of relaxation. It’s also a wonderful way to start your day instead of jumping out of bed and plowing ahead.
- **Presence in the moment.** Animals know how to just “be.” They can hold a space as sacred, whether it’s their favorite sunning spot or the mat by the front door. Observe your pets at these times. Watch as they tune out the world and practice the “art” of silence.
- **Discrimination.** Animals are a lot smarter than people when it comes to stress. They know when to walk away from a potentially hopeless situation that threatens their well-being. For example, when things are looking bleak, cats just turn around, shake it off, and walk away to a secluded spot. They have an innate ability to tune out the environment and to become aloof in intolerable situations. On a similar note, they’re not afraid to say “no,” walking away when they can’t handle additional stimulation. This is a wonderful lesson that we can learn from them as well.

13. Laugh

Children laugh an average of 400 times a day; adults, only 15. Somewhere on the way to adulthood we lose the ability to laugh 385 times a day. Up your laughter quotient with comedy videos or playing with your grandkids. In one study that lasted more than a year, cardiac patients who watched a comedy show on a daily basis had significantly lower stress hormone levels and blood pressure readings, and they needed less medication.

14. Play

This one may seem odd, but one of the most dismaying things I’ve discovered over years of medical practice is that adults no longer know how to play. When I ask my patients how they play, they often look at me with a blank expression. Or they say that they play golf or tennis. But sports activities are not really play. Sports can be enjoyable, but they’re not truly healing because they involve performance, competition, and the need to win. True play is spontaneous, has no set agenda or rules, nor even a desired outcome. When we play, we become totally free. Absorbed in the moment, we are taken out of our heads and into our bodies.

Get back in touch with the playful part of yourself by observing children and seeing what they do. Even better, play with a child and let him or her set the tone. Try swinging on a swing, blowing bubbles, finger painting, or playing catch.

15. Finally, ask yourself one question

When you feel your stress level rising, ask yourself, “Is this worth dying for?” I can assure you, it’s not.

RELAX AND ENJOY LIFE!

I practice prayer, reading, meditation, Thai yoga therapy, listening to soft classical music, fly fishing, walking, cooking, and eating with my wife, playing with my grandkids and the dog, and allowing myself to laugh, express anger, and cry when those emotions surface. It’s all about balance—that’s what counts!



The 8 Biggest Heart Disease Differences for Women

Unfortunately, most cardiologists still see heart disease as a male phenomenon, and they treat women less effectively and less aggressively than they treat men, often with catastrophic results. Women, too, are guilty of this thinking. They are far more frightened of breast cancer, despite having a five times greater risk of developing heart disease. I also worry because much of our knowledge about heart disease is based on research done with male patients and describes how the condition affects men. This leads many physicians to diagnose and treat women as if heart disease affected them the same way.

Nothing could be further from the truth: heart disease affects men and women very differently. Let's take a look at how women's risk factors for heart disease are different from men's:

1. Diabetes

Diabetic women have a higher risk for heart disease than diabetic men. This is because the incidence of diabetes and its complications (including heart disease) is much higher in women. If you are a diabetic woman, your risk for heart disease is five to seven times normal, compared with a risk of only two to three times normal for a diabetic man. For you, proper heart sense means you should increase your physical activity and watch your diet to maintain a healthy body weight.

2. Overweight

Women have a higher heart disease risk from being overweight than men do. Studies indicate that being only 20 pounds overweight doubles a woman's risk of heart disease. If you are overweight, I don't want you to go on a starvation diet. Instead, get physically active—it's your most powerful weapon against fat. Plus, it's important to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, and lean poultry—and omit the carbohydrates.

3. Low HDL cholesterol

Women have a higher risk for heart disease than men if they have low levels of HDL cholesterol. The good news is that HDL is sensitive to factors such as smoking, obesity, and lack of exercise. If your HDL is low (less than 35 mg/dL) you can raise it by quitting smoking and dropping excess weight through a combination of healthy eating and physical activity.

4. High triglycerides

A high triglyceride level (above 200 mg/dL) is more dangerous for women than for men, especially when a woman also has diabetes. Diabetic women with high triglycerides are up to 200 times more likely to develop heart disease.

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SYMPTOMS OF ANGINA OR HEART ATTACK IN WOMEN

- Chest (middle, left, or right side) discomfort, pain, or pressure
- Back discomfort
- Pain or tingling of the jaw, elbow, or arm (more often the left arm)
- Throat tightness
- Shortness of breath
- Indigestion, or a feeling that if you could "burp" the feeling of fullness would resolve
- Nausea, vomiting
- Lightheadedness with exertion, dizziness, or vertigo
- Disproportionate sweating with activity
- Sudden profound fatigue

The 8 Biggest Heart Disease Differences for Women

5. Hormones

During the childbearing years, when estrogen levels are high, women are largely protected from heart disease. In fact, most women don't become vulnerable to cardiovascular disease until 10 to 15 years later in life than men, when the production of estrogen begins to decline and women enter menopause. After menopause, a woman's heart disease risk quadruples! Because of this, women who have significant additional risk factors are good candidates for bioidentical hormone replacement therapy. That's also the case if you are symptomatic with hot flashes, insomnia, irritability, and if any of the following apply:

- You experienced a natural menopause before age 40, or your menopause was induced by surgery, illness, or treatment before age 45.
- You already have diagnosed cardiovascular disease or diabetes, or you have a strong family history of coronary artery disease.
- You are overweight, and the bulk of your excess body weight is centered around your waist and upper body.
- You smoke cigarettes.
- You eat a poorly balanced, low-nutrient dense diet.

6. Different symptoms

Cardiovascular disease often presents itself differently in women than in men. The classic symptoms of a heart attack, for example—chest pain and pain radiating down the left arm—are common in men, but less common for women. In women, a heart attack is far more likely to be experienced as a profound fatigue, a pain in her neck or radiating into her jaw, mild shortness of breath, or achy pains in the chest or back. Many women will write off their symptoms as a “flu” feeling. Consequently, they don't seek appropriate medical attention, and may not receive aggressive intervention if they do.

7. Smaller anatomy

Women's hearts are smaller than men's, and their arteries are narrower, which means they can be blocked more easily by plaque buildup.

8. Emotional origin

Heart problems are often more than medical for women. Heart ailments in women are often problems of the heart, of the fullness of their emotional lives. Preventive medicine—watching for subtle signs and staying on top of overall “quality of life” issues—is really the best medicine.

THE BEST HEART HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS FOR WOMEN

- CoQ10
- L-carnitine
- B vitamins (folic acid, B12, B6)
- Carotenoids (lutein)
- Magnesium/calcium
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin C
- OPC (grape seed, pycnogenol)
- Vitamin D
- Omega-3 fish or squid oil

The 10 Most Common Heart Health Fallacies

10

During my 30-plus years in active practice, I repeatedly encountered misguided patients who would twist, ignore, or minimize my recommendations in order to continue with their bad habits and beliefs. All doctors, of course, are challenged by noncompliant patients. However, when you're dealing with the heart, non-compliance not only can be detrimental, it can be lethal. That's why it's important to make sure you're not falling victim to any of the following 10 ways of thinking.

1. Vitamins alone will protect me.

A lot of people think they can eat anything they want as long as they take nutritional supplements. One patient I had stands out in my mind. He was a middle-aged professional man who came to see me just before going on a cruise. "Hey doc," he said, "now that I'm taking your CoQ10 and other pills, I can eat anything I want, right?" Wrong. Yes, supplements are protective. But they are not a license for eating poorly and consuming too many calories. You can easily overwhelm their positive effect with a nutrient-poor, calorie-laden diet.

2. A low-fat label means it's healthy.

Listed among the ingredients of many so-called healthy low-fat foods are sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and other unneeded sweeteners. Yes, you get less fat with these products. But instead you get more sugar, calories, and an insulin response. That's why many people will gain weight on a low-fat diet. They unwittingly replace fat with sugar, and the body responds by storing the excess nonmetabolized calories as fat. So be sure to scour low-fat food labels for sugar content.

3. Smoking has some virtues.

Even after they had a heart attack, some of my patients continued to smoke. They had all kinds of excuses to justify their behavior, such as "it relaxes me," "it takes the edge off," or "it takes away my appetite so I eat less and lose weight." I've even had men tell me they enjoy smoking cigars but don't inhale. Secondhand smoke, of course, can be harmful, and pleasurable mouthfuls of smoke, even if not ultimately inhaled, mean that toxic chemicals, pesticides, and insecticides are being absorbed into the bloodstream. Smoking kills, period.

4. Losing a few extra pounds won't help.

I frequently saw patients who were maybe 10 or 20 pounds heavier than they should have been, but did not think of themselves as overweight. I also counseled those who believed that in order to make a real difference in their health, they had to lose a lot of weight. But by losing even a few pounds you reduce abdominal fat, which is a major source of potentially damaging inflammatory chemicals. Lowering your body weight by just 10 percent can bring down your blood pressure numbers and reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes. So when it comes to weight loss, keep in mind that a little means a lot.

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"The reason people gain weight on a low-fat diet is that they unwittingly replace fat with sugar, and the body responds by storing the excess nonmetabolized calories as fat."

Stephen Sinatra M.D.



The 10 Most Common Heart Health Fallacies

10

5. No pain, no gain.

Getting patients to exercise is a challenge for every doctor. That's because most people mistakenly believe that they must sweat buckets and really feel the burn in order to reap the health benefits associated with exercise. But living at the gym, hoisting monster weights, or logging endless miles on the treadmill are certainly not required for a healthy heart. You just have to move regularly. Reframe the idea of exercise in terms of activities you can incorporate into your lifestyle, such as walking the dog, walking and talking with friends, gardening, or going square dancing. It's all exercise and it's good for your heart and the rest of your body.

6. Oil is oil.

Many patients set themselves up for potential health problems by cooking with the wrong oils, namely canola, peanut, corn, and sunflower. The problem is that these oils oxidize rapidly with heat and the resultant chemical transformations can have a serious impact on your heart health. Even heart-healthy extra virgin olive oil oxidizes fairly easily and therefore is not the best option for most cooking. So save it for drizzling onto vegetables and salads, and instead use a light olive oil for cooking at low temperatures for shorter periods of time, such as sautéing. For other cooking I recommend coconut oil, a saturated fat that's least vulnerable to oxidative deterioration from heat.

7. Saturated fat is something to be feared.

Patients often avoid foods containing saturated fats, such as meat, eggs, nuts, and butter, fearing that saturated fat turns into cholesterol in the body, which then promotes heart disease. Eggs have probably taken the biggest hit because of this cholesterol fear, and that's a shame. Cage-free, DHA-fortified organic eggs are a perfect protein and can be eaten quite frequently, up to six a week. I simply don't believe that people need to, or even should, shun all foods with cholesterol or saturated fats. Like everything else, you want balance in your diet.

8. We are born meat eaters.

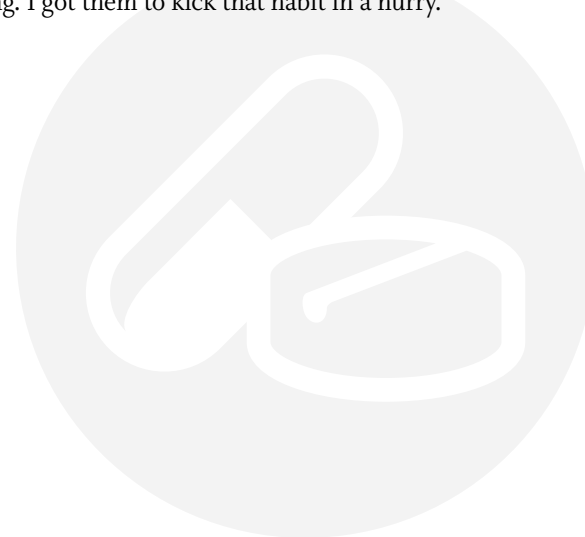
Type O is the most common type of blood, and, according to the popular blood-type diet, those with this common blood type are best suited for eating meat. Yet, I've often reminded ultra-carnivore patients about a Japanese researcher-gastroenterologist who had conducted some 300,000 colonoscopies during his career and found that cancer of the bowels was directly related to eating meat. That's because meat doesn't have gut-cleaning fiber. Without fiber, meat remains in the gut too long and putrefies. Moreover, if meat isn't organic, you have insecticides and pesticides being absorbed as well. I follow the 80/20 rule when it comes to meat. That means 80 percent of the diet should be vegetables, fruit, and non-GMO gluten-free grains with fiber, and 20 percent meat. Again, it's all about balance.

9. Wine is good for you, so drink up.

Scientific research has shown that wine contains all sorts of healthy compounds and is at the heart of the so-called French paradox where despite eating rich, fatty foods—and having an average cholesterol of 250—the French experience a relatively low level of heart disease. But the French also have the highest incidence of cirrhosis of the liver in the world. So again, moderation is the name of the game. Keep it to one glass of wine, three or four times a week.

10. An aspirin a day keeps the cardiologist away.

Practically every new patient I saw thought they should be taking an aspirin a day to protect their cardiovascular health. It is true that if you have coronary artery disease, an aspirin is beneficial in order to keep the blood thin. But, I don't like or believe in aspirin for primary prevention. There are other natural blood thinners, such as omega-3 fatty acids and nattokinase, that should be used first. Unlike aspirin, these blood-thinning alternatives don't carry a risk for excessive bleeding. I saw many new patients taking aspirin for primary prevention who had symptoms of aspirin side effects, including overt bruising and gastrointestinal bleeding. I got them to kick that habit in a hurry.



NEED ANOTHER REASON TO CURTAIL YOUR ALCOHOL INTAKE?

Alcohol, like caffeine, can deplete calcium, harming bone strength. So, limit your intake to three or four glasses of wine per week.

My Top 5 Recommendations to Help You Achieve the Best Surgical Outcome

Many cardiovascular patients eventually are told that they require surgical intervention to help manage their disease. In some cases, the need for surgery is clear cut; for example, an artery that is fully or almost fully blocked requires intervention if you are having symptoms. But in other situations, decisions are less urgent and, therefore, more difficult, particularly when doctors pressure patients to have the procedure. Here are the things I recommend for the best possible outcome.

1. Decide based on your quality of life

My advice is to first consider the severity of your symptoms and whether they can be relieved through less invasive alternatives, and to base your choice primarily on your overall quality of life.

Questions to ask yourself:

- **Where are your blockages located and how severe are they?** If the left main coronary artery is blocked more than 70 percent, or there is 90 to 95 percent narrowing of two or more other major coronary vessels, surgery is necessary.
- **How severe are your symptoms?** Do you suffer frequent bouts of angina or shortness of breath after minimal exertion?

- **Can you live your life comfortably with your symptoms?**
- **Can you do anything (medication or lifestyle changes) to diminish your symptoms without surgery?**
- **If you are a candidate for angioplasty and a stent?** How many stents will be required?

I recommend surgery when blocked arteries lead to an unsatisfactory quality of life or a high risk of heart attack. “Unsatisfactory” in this case means frequent bouts of angina; shortness of breath with minimal exertion (often referred to as an anginal equivalent); or the inability to walk up a short flight of stairs, enjoy a game of golf, or play with the grandkids.

Some cardiologists may prefer angioplasty-stents over open heart surgery, but I disagree when more than one or two stents are required. Surgical patients fare better than stented patients in both the short and long term, especially those who are diabetic. Even multiple bypasses are better than multiple stents. However, I do endorse the use of a stent or two if it means you can avoid having your chest opened up.

For patients whose coronary artery disease is more stable and who are at less risk, alternative therapies are justified.

2. Before surgery, stop certain supplements and foods

Because of their blood-thinning effects and/or potential to interfere with anesthesia, stop the

following nutritional supplements at least five days prior to surgery:

- Garlic
- Fish oil
- St. John’s wort
- Feverfew
- Ginseng
- Licorice
- Vitamin E
- *Ginkgo biloba*
- Ephedra (also called Ma Huang)
- Goldenseal
- Ginger
- Valerian

In my experience, you’re okay to stop five days before, and then start up again five days after. Whatever you do, though, be sure to inform your doctors.

I also tell patients who are going in for major surgery involving general anesthesia to stop drinking alcohol a month before the operation. You need your liver operating optimally and, as you no doubt know, alcohol is toxic to the liver.

I also suggest staying away from acetaminophen, which has a toxic effect on the liver. In clinical studies, this over-the-counter painkiller has been associated with unexplained liver failure. If you rely on painkillers, check with your doctor for any pre-operation advice.

3. Maximize your recovery with nutritional support pre- and post-surgery

- Take a high-quality multivitamin as part of your daily routine before and after surgery. Choose one that contains 25–50 mg of the B-complex vitamins.
- Surgical trauma (particularly from cardiac surgery) causes an increase in free radicals, which disrupt and damage cellular function. For this reason alone, you should take at least 50 mg of CoQ10 as part of

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BEATING HEART BYPASS—THE BEST OPTION

At this point in its evolution, bypass surgery is considered very safe. But no invasive surgical process is without some inherent risks, so advances in techniques for bypass surgery are ongoing.

One of the more recent advances is off-pump coronary artery bypass (OPCAB). Also referred to as “beating heart” bypass, OPCAB eliminates the need for the heart-lung or cardiopulmonary machine (CPM) during surgery. During OPCAB, surgeons stabilize areas of the beating heart while local arteries are bypassed. This method, involving the use of special, strategically placed “prongs,” enables a greater number of patients to undergo bypass surgery and face fewer surgical risks.

Research indicates that OPCAB is associated with fewer cases of death, stroke, and heart attack during surgery, a lowered incidence of brain swelling, dialysis, wound infection, and less need for post-operative red blood cell transfusion. Hospital stays also tend to be shorter (4–6 days versus 7 days for standard bypass), and recoveries are quicker (2–4 weeks versus 6–8 weeks for standard bypass).

Contraindications to OPCAB are the presence of multiple unfavorable characteristics including an enlarged heart, low ejection fraction (<25 percent), small vessels, and vessels with diffuse disease.

My Top 5 Recommendations to Help You Achieve the Best Surgical Outcome

your daily routine before surgery, and 100–200 mg per day for at least four weeks during surgery recovery.

- Because surgery depletes your body of vitamin C, take 500–1,000 mg as part of your daily routine before surgery and 1,000 mg two times a day after surgery. Return to your usual dosage after two weeks.

Numerous studies indicate that vitamin C helps prevent surgical shock and post-surgical bed sores, and that it significantly speeds healing time. It's also necessary for the production of collagen—a basic structural protein used in wound repair.

- Begin taking milk thistle a month before surgery, and then continue for a month after (follow label instructions for dosage). This wonderful herb protects, rejuvenates and repairs the liver. General anesthesia and other medications used during and after surgery are exceptionally hard on the liver, so anything you can do to protect this vital organ will be a big plus for your surgery recovery.
- Increase your zinc intake to 30–50 mg for two weeks before and two weeks after surgery, using zinc picolinate. Zinc is critical to wound healing, and surgery or trauma can decrease the level of zinc in your body.
- Start taking a probiotic supplement two weeks before surgery, and continue using it for at least a month afterward—or, better yet, indefinitely. Choose a strain that contains *acidophilus* and *bifida* bacteria (follow label instructions for dosage).

Surgical patients often receive oral or intravenous antibiotics in the hospital, which creates the potential for fungal disorders (including yeast infections), digestive disturbances and diarrhea. A probiotic can help counteract these problems, promoting surgery recovery.

Also after surgery:

- **Take 250 mg of vitamin B6 twice a day for a week, starting three days after surgery.** This nutrient helps reduce post-surgical fluid retention, such as swelling of the face, hands, feet, or legs. The swelling usually takes two to four weeks to go down. With B6, you can experience substantial reduction within 24 to 48 hours.
- **To reduce inflammation, take 2,000–3,000 mg of omega-3 fish or squid oil per day for two weeks after surgery.** You can then go to a maintenance dosage of 500–1,000 mg per day. If fish oil is already part of your daily routine, be sure to stop taking it five days before surgery, since it can promote blood thinning and increase bleeding during surgery.
- **Take bromelain on an empty stomach for two weeks after surgery (follow label instructions for dosage).** This formidable pineapple enzyme supplement helps prevent blood clots, aids the liver and digestion, and decreases inflammation and pain after surgery—all vital to surgery recovery. It also helps to remove protein debris that form at trauma sites.
- **Another supplement to relieve pain and inflammation is the homeopathic**

remedy Arnica 30C. Take one pellet four or five times a day for up to two weeks after surgery.

4. Use targeted nutrients to prevent restenosis

One of the biggest problems with bypass and angioplasty (but particularly angioplasty) is restenosis, or the reclosure of the arteries. In the case of angioplasty, restenosis typically occurs within three to four months of the procedure, and it may even occur up to a year or more afterwards.

Targeted supplementation can help minimize and prevent this process. If you have a history of successful angioplasty or a bypass, your regimen should include:

- B vitamins (400 mcg of folic acid, 40 mg of B6, and 200 mcg of B12)
- Vitamin E (200–400 IU)
- CoQ10 (120 mg)
- L-carnitine (2 g)
- Magnesium (400 mg)
- Fish or squid oil (1–2 g)

Taken together, these nutrients will help relax blood vessels, inhibit sticky blood and block excessive growth of smooth muscle cells to prevent restenosis. The B-vitamin combination of folic acid, B6, and B12 is particularly important. One study found that this vitamin combination significantly reduced the incidence of restenosis and slashed the need for a repeat angioplasty by 38 percent.

5. Remember, your procedure is not a cure

If you do undergo bypass or angioplasty, remember that neither procedure is a cure. You still have arterial disease. What it does is “buy you time” to you help reverse your coronary artery disease and possibly even heal yourself.

POST-BYPASS ARRHYTHMIA PREVENTION

Researchers in the UK reviewed 107 papers on the subject of OPCAB, 18 of which provided sound evidence that OPCAB significantly reduced the incidence of another common post-operative complication: atrial fibrillation (AF).

One study showed that people with higher baseline preoperative C-reactive protein (CRP) levels are more likely to develop post-operative AF, whether on- or off-pump, but that overall, OPCAB patients did better.

I believe the argument that inflammation—caused by the CPM, the actual physical handling of the heart, and the cutting of the arteries during bypass—is the probable cause of post-op arrhythmia, regardless of which procedure is chosen.

For this reason, I recommend that patients who are anticipating bypass surgery take 2 g of omega-3 squid or fish oil daily to help prevent peri-operative AF; I have them discontinue that dose five days before surgery so that their blood doesn't become too thin. Post-op, I would resume this practice after five days as well.

The Top 5 Things to Know After a Heart Attack

Many people think a heart attack will never happen to them and take their heart health for granted. The next thing they know, they're a patient on the critical care unit for cardiovascular issues. I hope you never need this information and, chances are good that if you've been following my heart health advice over the years, you won't have a heart attack.

But none of us ever knows when we may find ourselves riding in an ambulance, praying for the survival of a friend, neighbor, or loved one who has just had a heart attack. Should this happen to you, there are two things you can do immediately that could greatly improve their chances of surviving a heart attack.

First, call for an ambulance immediately! People who get to the emergency room within a half hour of a heart attack have a far better chance of surviving than people who arrive hours later. Second, give the person an aspirin to chew on until the ambulance arrives. Not ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or another pain reliever—but an aspirin, which helps to thin the blood.

Then, after a heart attack occurs there are 5 things you want to be mindful of:

1. Understand that life will be different for a while.

One of the hardest things for many of my patients to appreciate after a heart attack is that there's a damaged area in their heart that's healing. So often they don't understand why simple activities that never used to tire them are exhausting during the first three months of recovery (the average length of time it takes for your heart to knit a strong scar). The reason

for that fatigue, which is the number one symptom after a heart attack, is that the heart is using a lot of energy for healing, and it can only tolerate a little effort at a time.

If you're having trouble imagining how the heart heals, think back to a time when you scraped your knee during a bad fall. You were probably a child when it happened. Remember what the scab looked like as it filled in? Do you recall how you couldn't even bend your knee all the way because the scar limited your efforts? In what seemed to take forever, you eventually developed a scar that was a little different in color from the rest of your knee, leaving a telltale mark to carry with you for the rest of your life.

Well, it's the same with the heart. A similar knitting-together and deep healing is taking place there, too. In both cases, white blood cells come in, scavenge damaged and dead tissue, and clear it away little by little as new cells are formed to replace them. That's why we usually see a patient's white blood cell count rise a bit the first few days after a myocardial infarction (MI). So does the sedimentation rate, an indication that inflammation is going on in the body somewhere. All of this is a normal part of recovery.

The scarred area of the heart will also never look the same again, and most likely doctors will be able to pinpoint it on future electrocardiograms and echocardiograms. But, the more you slow down and gradually work back to normal activity, the better your heart will likely work in the future. The biggest threat is doing too much too soon, which can jeopardize the area of still-vulnerable tissue along the edges of that scar that's trying to form.

(continued...)

PAN-ASIAN MEDITERRANEAN (PAM) EATING RULES

My heart-healthy PAM diet plan includes 45 to 50 percent slow-burning, low-glycemic index carbohydrates; 30 percent healthy fats; and 20 to 25 percent protein. I'd also urge you to eat organic as much as possible. In short, here are some guidelines:

Increase your intake of:

- Slow-burning, low-glycemic index vegetables, such as asparagus, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, and spinach
- Legumes, such as lentils, soybeans, and chickpeas (these contain folic acid, and help lower insulin levels)
- Onions and garlic (these contain sulfur derivatives and allicin, which help lower lipids and blood pressure)
- Fresh herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, and basil
- Organic fruits, such as cherries, peaches, plums, strawberries, blueberries, apricots, pears, kiwi, and apples (melons and grapes are suitable, but they contain more sugar)
- Sources of essential fatty acids (EFAs) and protein, such as wild cold-water fish and organic eggs
- Fermented soy products, such as tempeh
- Fish, especially fatty ones like wild salmon
- Healthy fats, such as virgin olive, walnut, and flax oils
- Nuts and seeds, including walnuts, almonds, chestnuts, and flaxseed
- Cottage cheese, feta cheese, and grated Parmesan

(continued on page 43...)

The Top 5 Things to Know After a Heart Attack

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2. Keep up with your rehab program, including exercise and diet.

If there is a hospital near you that offers a cardiac rehabilitation program, ask your M.D. to give you a referral so that your insurance company is more likely to cover your attendance. You will need a low-level stress test so the cardiologist can write your exercise prescription, and the staff there will teach you how to exercise safely after a heart attack and progress your level of exercise each week under close supervision. (Plus, you will make great friends with others going through recovery, just like you!)

3. It's important to follow a heart-healthy diet regimen.

As I mentioned on page 4, you want to nourish your body with the right foods. I'm a big believer in what I call the Pan-Asian Mediterranean (PAM) diet—a combination of the diet followed by the people on the Greek island of Crete (also known as the Mediterranean diet) and a diet common among people living on the Asian side of the Pacific Rim.

The Cretan, or Mediterranean, diet is a primitive diet of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fresh fish, various kinds of beans, monounsaturated olive oil, and sauces occasionally flavored with some lamb, turkey, or chicken. The diet favored around the Pacific Rim is bountiful with fish, fresh vegetables and fruits, locally harvested seaweeds, and soy products. What makes both of these diets so beneficial to heart health is that they are rich in omega-3 fats, which curb inflammation.

4. Fortify your heart with these five essential nutrients—which not only help to improve heart attack recovery, but help to ward off a second heart attack.

- **Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10):** Studies show that when CoQ10 is administered within the first day or two following a heart attack, survival rates increase by a remarkable 10 percent. In a controlled study of heart attack treatment with CoQ10, the supplement not only reduced arrhythmia and angina, it also demonstrated an astonishing ability to reduce subsequent heart attacks and sudden death. If you've had a heart attack, I recommend taking 100–200 mg of CoQ10 per day.
- **L-carnitine:** As with CoQ10, if L-carnitine is administered within the first day or two after a heart attack, survival is extended and the area of tissue damage is significantly reduced. I recommend 1–2 g in divided doses (such as 500 mg three times a day).
- **Magnesium:** There is a great deal of evidence that magnesium, when administered according to specific protocols in appropriate dosages, can reduce mortality in patients who have suffered a heart attack. Magnesium calms the heart, reduces arrhythmia and spasm of blood vessels, and lowers blood pressure. I recommend 200–400 mg of magnesium daily.

- **D-ribose:** There's a profound depression of the energy compound ATP during a heart attack when the heart is deprived of oxygen. The heart loses up to half of its ATP production ability. Although the heart eventually recovers, D-ribose can dramatically reduce the amount of time it takes to restore the heart's ATP production and to normalize cardiac function. I recommend that heart attack patients take 10–15 g in divided doses two to three times daily.
- **Omega-3s:** There is absolutely no downside to omega-3s for heart attack patients, and it can truly be lifesaving. The landmark GISSI trial in Italy showed a 45 percent reduction in death from subsequent heart attacks for patients who took 1 g of omega-3 rich fish oil daily following an initial heart attack. For patients who've had a heart attack, I recommend taking 1–2 g of omega-3 oil daily.

5. Know that your life can actually improve after a heart attack.

Most patients find they finally start really living after a heart attack. They usually feel better than they did before their heart attack because they're eating mindfully, exercising, and taking key nutritional supplements—usually for the first time in their lives.

In addition, they have taken time out for personal relationships. Many patients tell me that in the months following their heart attack, they felt—sometimes for the first time—just how much other people cared about them. So the upside to this horrific journey is that when people stop taking their heart and their life for granted, and start protecting them like the precious gifts they are, they usually feel and act like new people. And the truth is, they are. Like a phoenix, they have risen from the ashes of their old life to begin anew.

PAN-ASIAN MEDITERRANEAN (PAM) EATING RULES

(continued from page 41...)

Decrease your intake of:

- Foods containing refined white flour or sugar, such as breads, pastas, and bagels
- Partially hydrogenated oils, found in commercially prepared crackers, cookies, chips, and other snacks
- Starchy vegetables such as corn, peas, and carrots
- Canned vegetables, because they're usually very high in sodium
- Processed fruit juices, which are often loaded with sugars
- Omega-6 oils, such as corn, safflower, soy, and canola



The Top 10 Things I've Learned as a Cardiologist

In my 30 plus years as a practicing cardiologist, I've seen countless patients with various heart health concerns. For some, their biggest issue was high blood pressure or atrial fibrillation. For others, the heart problems were much tougher to diagnose and heal. But regardless of the specific health issues that brought patients into my office, there were many common threads that prevailed throughout my career—lessons I want to share with you.

1. Disease is an opportunity.

Over the years, I've seen the incredible power mental outlook plays in any disease—whether it's heart disease, cancer, or diabetes. People who view their diagnosis as an opportunity, and don't fall victim to it, have far better outcomes. In reality, illness is a signal that your body is out of balance—and reframing it as an opportunity to pursue a healthier lifestyle, puts you in control. In fact, I've seen people whose health was far better after their illness than before.

2. Emotional toxicity impedes healing.

Negative thinking, especially in the subconscious mind, can be dangerous. That's because negative thinking can almost create the illness. Emotions are critical in any illness and emotional toxicity can perpetuate illness.

3. There is tremendous power in positive thinking.

I've seen people who statistically didn't have a chance of survival, but believed they could survive—and they did! If you emotionally grab hold of an illness and stay positive, that's at least half the battle.

4. The incredible importance of the patient-physician relationship.

Real healing takes place when the patient and physician “dance together.” If the patient intends to heal and the physician is invested, healing can happen. The inverse is also true. I've seen patients who unconsciously wanted to remain sick because they relished the attention and pampering they received at home. When a patient does that, he or she diminishes the patient-physician relationship and healing is prolonged.

5. Patients' unconscious drives are critical.

What drives a personality, and healing, in a lot of people are the things they cannot get in touch with—the unconscious mind. It takes a very skilled physician to discern between what the patient is outwardly telling him or her, and the truth that exists in the patient's unconscious mind. The unconscious mind always tells the truth.

6. The body has the innate wisdom to heal itself.

Our bodies have the natural stem cell wisdom we were born with. If you can support the body with natural healing methodologies—such as a healthy

diet, grounding, exercise, and nutritional supplements—the body has the inner wisdom to heal itself.

7. The power of metabolic cardiology.

Metabolic cardiology is a combination of nutrients I discovered during the course of practicing cardiology, which I've dubbed the “Awesome Foursome.” These nutrients include L-carnitine, magnesium, D-ribose, and CoQ10. Together they increase adenosine triphosphate (ATP) throughout the body—including the heart, eyes, joints, and more. Whenever you bring ATP to the table you not only repair, you rejuvenate and revive.

8. The health-boosting impact of grounding.

The energy of Mother Earth is extremely powerful. Grounding by putting your bare feet on the Earth's surface, or using a grounding pad, has a tremendous ability to heal. It can make a real difference in heart health, lower blood pressure—and improve Parkinson's disease, chronic fatigue, Lyme disease, and many other illnesses.

9. The importance of perspective.

Putting things into perspective is extremely important. While some health issues may require enormous energy, most do not. So don't sweat the small stuff, and keep things in perspective.

10. As much as I embrace healing, there's always that natural time when life will end.

What I've found is that it's important to teach relatives about saying goodbye. Family members often don't know how to release family members at the time of death, and I've learned a lot as a doctor about how important it is to let a loved one go when it's their time.



My 20 Top Heart-Healthy Foods

Eating the right foods regularly has an enormous impact on your ability to maintain optimal heart health and peak overall health. Here are 20 foods that I believe offer the greatest health benefits and healing powers.

1. Asparagus

This tasty green boosts your body's production of glutathione, which helps to protect the integrity of your blood vessels by fighting inflammation and preventing damaging oxidation that can lead to clogged arteries. Plus, asparagus contains alpha-linoleic acid and folic acid, both of which prevent hardening of the arteries.

2. Avocados

Avocados contain both vitamin E and glutathione, which are potent antioxidants that defend your body against the free-radical damage that can lead to chronic inflammation. Plus, they help to prevent LDL cholesterol from oxidizing, which can lead to clogged arteries. Avocados also help to absorb other carotenoids like lycopene which is good for the heart.

3. Beets

Exceptionally high in powerful antioxidants, beets are recognized as one of the best foods to reduce homocysteine, which can cause premature aging of your blood vessels. Beets and beet juice also help to lower blood pressure. A study by the London School of Medicine and Dentistry found that those who drank 16 ounces of beet juice daily saw their blood pressure drop more than 10 points.

4. Blueberries

This delicious fruit contains anthocyanins, flavonoid pigments that help to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. In one study, British researchers found that those with the highest intake of anthocyanins (predominantly from blueberries and strawberries) had an 8 percent lower blood pressure than those with the lowest intake. Those same blood pressure friendly flavonoids also appear to protect your aging eyes and brain.



5. Broccoli

Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli contain an incredible number of phytonutrients that can protect against cell damage caused by free-radical stress, which can lead to cancer development. In particular, animal and population studies have shown that the phytonutrient indole-3-carbinol, specifically found in broccoli, can prevent tumors. Plus, your blood pressure will benefit from the calcium and potassium in broccoli, and your cardiac risk will benefit from the lutein present in this hearty green veggie.

6. Free-range buffalo

Did you know that it is against the law to inject buffalo with hormones? Well, it is. That means any buffalo meat you eat won't be laced with bovine growth hormone. Add to that the fact that buffalo meat includes an excellent source of muscle-building and hunger-satiating protein and heart-protective omega-3s and it's easy to see why buffalo meat is one of my top heart-healthy foods.

7. Cauliflower

While brightly colored fruits and vegetables tend to get all the press for their antioxidant powers, this pale white veggie is actually packed with strong phytonutrients that can protect against the cell damage caused by free-radical stress that can lead to cancer. Cauliflower also has the critical ability to reduce inflammation in the body, protecting against heart disease.



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NUTRITION TIP

Serve up salad as the main dish. Pour a bag of salad greens or spinach into a bowl and toss with feta cheese, sliced, boiled organic eggs or add fruit instead: oranges, raisins, or berries. You might also consider adding almonds, walnuts, or chia or flaxseeds to your salads. One of my favorite salads is couscous with apricots, pine nuts and ginger. Be careful to avoid store-bought dressings. Instead, use organic extra virgin olive oil.

My 20 Top Heart-Healthy Foods

8. Cinnamon

This spice possesses major antioxidant power, which enables it to squelch the free radicals in the body that trigger inflammatory conditions such as heart disease. Cinnamon contains not just one but five antioxidants. Cinnamaldehyde, the most powerful of cinnamon's antioxidants, has been shown to reduce arterial inflammation, as well as blood clots. Plus, researchers have found that cinnamon stimulates the release of nitric oxide, which causes blood vessels to dilate and increases blood flow and circulation. Cinnamon also supports blood sugar lowering.

9. Coconut oil

This delicious oil reduces LDL cholesterol levels, raises beneficial HDL levels, and makes blood platelets less sticky. Coconut oil is also rich in lauric acid, which is a natural antiviral and antibacterial compound. Plus, it contains myristic acid, an important fatty acid used by the immune system to fight tumors.

10. Dark chocolate

When eaten in moderation, dark chocolate is one of my top heart-healthy foods. It contains powerful antioxidant flavonoid compounds that improve circulation, help control blood pressure, reduce inflammation, prevent the oxidation of LDL cholesterol, and counteract free-radical molecules that damage healthy cells.

11. Flaxseeds

These delicious golden seeds are a fabulous vegetarian source of anti-inflammatory omega-3 essential fatty acids which the body can't produce on its own. Omega-3 fats have the critical ability to penetrate layers of cholesterol-laden plaque, reducing blood vessel inflammation and preventing blood-clotting deposits from clogging arteries.

12. Garlic

Sometimes called the "stinking rose," garlic is an excellent natural blood thinner. It's so effective, in fact, that I instruct some patients to take it easy on the garlic if they are on a pharmaceutical blood thinner like Coumadin. Garlic also has a proven track record for lowering blood pressure and contains natural phytonutrients that inhibit enzymes involved in the metabolism of dietary fats, thus favorably affecting blood lipid levels.

13. Natto

While some people are not fond of the sour aroma and nutty flavor of natto, it's probably one of the world's healthiest foods. That's because natto is a great source of two powerful nutrients: nattokinase and vitamin K2. Nattokinase helps to address one of the most overlooked problems in the development of heart disease and high blood pressure: hyperviscosity. In plain words, that means thick, sick, sticky and inflamed blood that moves slowly through the circulatory system. Plus, its high vitamin K2 content helps to move calcium into the bones and protects the cardiovascular system by helping to keep calcium out of the arterial walls.

14. Olive oil

This oil's unique combination of healthy monounsaturated fats and powerful antioxidants known as polyphenols, help to block the oxidation of LDL cholesterol. The oxidation of LDL cholesterol fuels relentless inflammation, which in turn causes coronary heart disease. So protecting LDL cholesterol from oxidation is a crucial step in preventing atherosclerosis ("hardening" of the arteries). Olive oil also helps to reduce inflammation, lowers blood pressure, and helps to prevent heart disease by raising HDL cholesterol.

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HEALTHY COOKING TIP

Use organic extra virgin olive oil on salads and veggies, and light olive oil for low-heat cooking or sautéing. Olive oil contains monounsaturated fatty acids and phenolic compounds—a few of the nutrients that make it a perfect anti-aging functional food.



My 20 Top Heart-Healthy Foods

15. Onions

Although many people may not value the odoriferous qualities of onions, as a cardiologist, I certainly value the fibrinolytic qualities of onions—that is, their ability to help promote thinner blood and break up blood clots, which are important factors in staving off heart disease. What's more, onions contain quercetin, which helps to block the oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

16. Pomegranates

The health benefits of pomegranate juice make it one of the richest sources of antioxidant flavonoids—healing compounds in plants—that nature has to offer. Research has confirmed that the particular flavonoids in pomegranates have the ability to slow the development of atherosclerotic disease in mice and humans to help prevent cholesterol oxidation in the blood. Pomegranates also help to lower blood pressure, reduce oxidized LDL antibodies, and reduce the intramedial thickness (IMT) of the carotid artery walls.

17. Salmon

Wild salmon is a great medicinal food loaded with heart-healthy omega-3 essential fatty acids. These healthy fats penetrate layers of cholesterol-laden plaque, soothing inflammation in blood vessels and preventing blood-clotting deposits from lining coronary arteries. EFAs can also prevent spasms of the coronary blood vessels and the rupture of plaque. In one study, people who ate two meals of fatty fish per month—such as salmon—experienced a 30 percent reduction in cardiac arrest. Four fatty-fish meals a month were associated with a 50 percent reduction in cardiac arrest!

18. Seaweed

Seaweed is not a single vegetable, but a large group of plants with a wide range of flavors and textures. These sea vegetables also happen to be exceptionally rich in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Because they are so nutrient dense, eating seaweeds has a long tradition in Japan as medicinal: utilized in treating cancer, lowering blood pressure, thinning the blood, preventing ulcers, and protecting against radioactive damage.

19. Spinach

Most people don't realize it, but spinach is an excellent source of calcium—the mineral most famous for boosting bone and tooth health, but also known to help maintain healthy blood pressure levels. The benefits of eating spinach also include the important antioxidants vitamins C and E, which reduce the oxidative stress in your body and benefit the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. Plus, this leafy green nutritional powerhouse is rich in the antioxidant lutein, which is found in HDL or “good” cholesterol and may prevent LDL cholesterol from oxidizing and promoting heart disease.

20. Tomatoes

Tomatoes contain lycopene, which has also been shown to lower heart disease risk due to its impact on LDL cholesterol. Specifically, lycopene prevents LDL cholesterol from oxidizing, which is the process that initiates heart disease. In one study, researchers found that men with the lowest levels of lycopene in their blood were three times more likely to have a heart attack than those who had more. Finally, the benefits of its antioxidants have been linked to boosting eye health, particularly reducing the risk of developing cataracts. Plus, it helps to reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

HEALTHY COOKING TIP

Vegetables are best steamed, sautéed, broiled, or roasted. I particularly love steamed vegetables. To cook them, place water in a wok or frying pan and use a steaming rack or tray if you have one. Place the vegetables into the wok or pan and heat and steam for a few minutes until the vegetables are tender, stirring frequently if not using a rack.

When tender, sprinkle organic extra virgin olive oil over the veggies and add garlic, Celtic sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

The 10 Worst Foods You Can Eat

You likely know that junk foods, such as potato chips and cookies aren't heart-healthy options. But there are other foods where the dangers are far less obvious. Here are the top 10 foods you should avoid, not in any particular order—they're all equally bad!

1. Microwave popcorn

While air popped popcorn is a healthy choice, containing more antioxidant polyphenols than fruits and vegetables, microwave popcorn is a health disaster! First off, the microwavable bag is lined with a substance that releases perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) when heated, which is a potential carcinogen. Second, the artificial butter flavoring in microwave popcorn may contain chemicals known to cause respiratory problems. Plus, some microwave popcorns contain trans fat, a major contributor to arterial inflammation.

2. Fat-free ice cream

Low-fat, or nonfat, ice cream may sound healthier than the full fat variety—but it can actually be worse. That's because manufacturers often replace the missing fat with sugar, which can lead to inflammation. Plus, fat helps to slow insulin surges needed to metabolize sugar in your bloodstream. If you have to eat ice cream, keep the fat and limit your portion size to half a cup.

3. "Natural" sugar substitutes and artificial sweeteners

Many sweeteners are touted as healthier because they're natural, but don't buy into the hype. Whether it's raw sugar, agave, or molasses, if it contains sugar it can raise your blood sugar—and lead to arterial inflammation. Chemical sugar substitutes like aspartame, sucralose, or saccharin haven't earned my trust either and can potentially contribute to diabetes and cancer. If you have to feed a sweet tooth, opt for very small amounts of honey, pure maple syrup, or the natural sweetener Stevia.

4. Canned soup

Although quick and convenient, canned soups have a lot of downsides. Many of them contain monosodium glutamate (MSG), a flavor enhancer that can cause headaches, nausea, and heart palpitations. Plus, canned soups tend to be high in salt, and many soup cans contain the chemical BPA which can leach into the soup. Instead of canned soup, I recommend making your own which allows you to select the ingredients. You can even freeze it to have on hand the next time you want a quick meal.

5. Conventionally grown apples, strawberries, grapes, peaches, and nectarines

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) found that all of these fruits have high pesticide residues, with apples topping the list, followed by strawberries, then grapes. Peaches and nectarines ranked fifth and eighth, respectively (celery, spinach, bell peppers, cucumbers and cherry tomatoes also made it into the top ten). The EWG noted findings of 15 pesticides in a single grape, and 13 different pesticides within one strawberry sampling. So, if you're going to eat any of these fruits, opt for organic instead.

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Be mindful of the "hidden" salt in prepared and packaged foods like canned goods, powdered soups, and fast-food, flame-broiled chicken, among other foods.



The 10 Worst Foods You Can Eat

6. Conventionally grown corn

Most conventional corn on the market today has been genetically modified. Genetically modified crops—also called GMOs (genetically modified organisms)—are controversial for numerous reasons, one of the main ones being that such crops are often engineered to withstand large doses of toxic herbicides. So, with corn, buy organic whenever possible and try to support local farmers who don't use chemicals (or use far less of them) whenever possible.

7. Margarine

Margarine is generally made by hydrogenating liquid polyunsaturated oil, to create a spread that's similar to butter. Hydrogenation creates toxic trans fats which induce free-radical stress and increase harmful Lp(a) cholesterol. My advice: ditch the margarine and opt for grass-fed organic butter whenever possible.

8. Hot dogs, bacon, and cold cuts

Hot dogs, sausages, bacon, and lunch meats are all highly processed meat products—filled with nitrates and salt. Eat these foods in strict moderation, if at all, and be sure to accompany them with plenty of fiber-filled fresh fruits and vegetables to help move them through your digestive tract more quickly.

9. Doughnuts

Not only are doughnuts filled with inflammatory sugar, they're generally loaded with unhealthy omega-6 fats which oxidize when exposed to high frying temperatures. Plus, doughnuts are devoid of nutrients and fiber, making them a source of empty calories.

10. Swordfish

While fish is generally healthy, swordfish contains high levels of mercury—a neurotoxin that affects the central nervous system. If seafood is on your menu, steer clear of farm-raised fish and pick fish that are likely to contain the least amount of mercury: salmon, scallops, cod, pollock, sardines, herring, sole, scrod, and Atlantic halibut.

INSTEAD OF DOUGHNUTS, REACH FOR DARK CHOCOLATE

Believe it or not, dark chocolate, which contains 65 percent polyphenol-rich cocoa, is one of the best desserts you can choose for a heart-healthy diet. It helps to lower blood pressure levels and helps to lower your risk of cardiometabolic disorders. In fact, research shows higher chocolate consumption was linked with a 37 percent reduction in cardiovascular disease and a 29 percent reduction in strokes.

My Top 20 Heart-Healthy Recipes

When it comes to maintaining the health of your heart, eating healthy is extremely important. These heart-healthy recipes are inspired by Mediterranean flavors and even include a few Japanese favorites to produce healthy, great tasting meals. Each recipe is comprised of foods naturally rich in critical nutrients such as antioxidants, fiber, and essential fatty acids that help reduce the risk of heart disease and cardiac events.

Roast Salmon	2 servings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 lb. wild salmon filet • 1 Tbsp. organic light virgin olive oil • 1 clove garlic, crushed • 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh dill • Black pepper to taste • 1 lemon, sliced • Parsley for garnish 	
<p>Preheat oven to 425° F. Cut salmon in half to form two pieces. Rub with olive oil, garlic, dill, and pepper. Roast 10-12 minutes, depending on thickness or until opaque and flaky. Garnish with parsley and fresh lemon.</p>	
<p>Nutrition Facts (per serving): Calories 226, Fat 12 g, Sodium 105 mg, Carbs 9 g, Fiber 0 g, Protein 20 g</p>	

Baked Fish	6 servings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/4 cup organic light virgin olive oil • 2 pounds sea bass or salmon • 1/4 cup dry white wine • 2 garlic cloves, minced • Freshly ground pepper to taste • 2 tsp. chopped parsley • 2 tsp. chopped cilantro • Lemon wedges and/or organic extra virgin olive oil for serving 	
<p>Preheat the oven to 425° F. Rub a small amount of olive oil over the bottom of a roasting pan large enough to hold the fish in 1 layer. Rub the fish with a little more oil and place in the pan. Combine the remaining olive oil with the wine, garlic, pepper, and herbs. Drizzle the mixture over the fish, coating well.</p>	
<p>Bake the fish for 15-20 minutes, basting frequently with the pan juices. Remove the fish from the oven and test for doneness; the flesh should be opaque all the way through to the bone, and flake easily. If the fish is not done, return it to the oven for 5-10 minutes more.</p>	
<p>Nutrition Facts (per serving): Calories: 298, Fat 17g, Sodium 589 mg, Carbs 4 g, Protein 27g</p>	

Mussels Provençale	2 servings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 tsp. organic light virgin olive oil • 3 Tbsp. chopped shallots • 4 cloves of garlic, minced • 1/2 medium red pepper, chopped • 1 cup no-salt-added whole tomatoes with juice • 1/2 tsp. ground turmeric • 1/4 tsp. black pepper • 1 tsp. thyme • 1 tsp. sherry vinegar • 2 tsp. dried parsley • 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil • Red pepper flakes, to taste 	
<p>Heat oil in large frying pan over medium-high heat and cook shallots, garlic, and red pepper until tender, stirring often. Add tomatoes and seasonings; bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 2 minutes. Add mussels and fresh basil; cover and cook until mussels open, 5-6 minutes. Discard any shells that do not open.</p>	
<p>Nutrition Facts (per serving): Calories 479, Fat 15g, Sodium 857mg, Carbs 30g, Fiber 3g, Protein 56g</p>	

Salad Niçoise, Sinatra-Style	2 servings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 cup canned, unsalted or low-sodium white beans, drained and rinsed • 6 oz. cooked wild salmon (or 6 oz. can low-sodium salmon) • 1 large egg, boiled and sliced • 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes cut in half • 1/2 cup cooked green beans, cut in 2-inch pieces • 1 Tbsp. organic extra virgin olive oil • 2 tsp. lemon juice • 4 cups baby spinach or green leaf lettuce 	
<p>Toss all ingredients except spinach in a medium bowl. Serve on top of the baby spinach or lettuce.</p>	
<p>Nutrition Facts (per serving): Calories 271, Fat 10g, Sodium 322 mg, Carbs 13 g, Fiber 5 g, Protein 26 g</p>	

HEART-HEALTHY GRILLING TIPS

- **Clean Your Grill:** Before cooking, make sure you remove all food particles on your grill so you avoid eating any burned skin or fat.
- **Choose Your Marinades Wisely:** Marinades that contain vinegar or lemon juice help to speed up cooking and reduce the amount of time your meat spends on the grill. Plus, a marinade consisting of 10 percent plain soy sauce and 1 percent sugar has been found to cut the production of COPs (carcinogenic compounds) by more than 60 percent.
- **Use a Rosemary Rub:** Rosemary helps to prevent the buildup of toxic carcinogens in meat, and even contains compounds that prevent skin cancers. You can add a drizzle of light olive oil to aid in the rosemary rub. Grape seed oil is even better because it does not break down with high heat as much as olive oil can.
- **Add the Right Mix-Ins to Your Meat:** Research shows that adding tart cherries, red grapes, or plums (all good sources of pigmented antioxidants) to hamburger meat can cut HCA formation by 94 percent.
- **Grill Chicken Bone Side Down:** This tip ensures that the bone, not the meat, absorbs a lot of the heat from the grill. Just take the chicken meat off the bone, and remove the skin (which protects it from the high heat) before eating. Plus, remember to never dine on the burnt fat, as good as it may taste!

(continued...)

My Top 20 Heart-Healthy Recipes

Shrimp with Peppers, Tomatoes, and Garlic 4 servings

- 1 Tbsp. organic light virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup cooking sherry or dry white wine
- 1 tsp. ground coriander seed
- 1 cup no-salt-added crushed tomatoes
- 1 cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. brown sugar or honey
- 1 lb. cooked large shrimp
- 8 oz. short-grain brown rice or quinoa, cooked according to product directions

Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat and sauté garlic, peppers, and onion until tender. Add sherry and bring to a boil. Add rest of ingredients, bring to a boil again, and then serve over short-grain brown rice or quinoa.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 283, Fat 6 g, Sodium 210 mg,
Carbs 29 g, Fiber 5 g, Protein 27.5 g

Grilled Red Snapper 4 servings

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 lb. snapper filet
- Black pepper

Preheat broiler. Combine olive oil and lemon juice and brush on filet. Dust with black pepper. Grill 5 inches from broiler for 5 minutes or until fish flakes easily.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 140, Fat 5 g, Sodium 75 mg,
Carbs 0 g, Fiber 0 g, Protein 23 g

Chickpea Salad with Rosemary 2 servings

- 1 (15 oz.) can unsalted or low-sodium chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 Tbsp. chopped red onion
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp. organic extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 small tomato, diced
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl and chill for several hours.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 172, Fat 4 g, Sodium 361 mg,
Carbs 29 g, Fiber 6 g, Protein 6 g

Dr. Sinatra's Favorite Shiitake Recipe 4 servings

- 1/2 pound fresh shiitake mushrooms, diced
- 12 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp. organic light virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 2 small jars marinated artichoke hearts
- Chopped fresh cilantro, for flavor
- Chopped fresh parsley, for flavor
- Freshly ground black pepper

Lightly cook the shiitakes and garlic in the olive oil and water. Cover the pan briefly while they cook. When they're heated through, add artichoke hearts with their marinade. Sauté a few minutes longer until artichoke hearts are heated through. Transfer the mushrooms and artichoke hearts to a large bowl. Sprinkle with cilantro and parsley to taste and serve with pepper.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 187, Fat 13 g, Sodium 323 mg,
Carbs 17 g, Fiber 1 g, Protein 1.5 g

Tangy Citrus Chicken 6 servings

- 2 limes
- 2 tangerines
- Nonstick olive oil cooking spray
- 6 medium boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- 1/4 tsp. ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1/4 cup scallions, sliced
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh basil
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 1/2 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 cups short-grain brown rice or amaranth, cooked according to product directions

Finely shred lime peels to measure 1/2 teaspoon. Finely shred tangerine peels to measure 1 teaspoon. Set aside. Halve limes and squeeze 2 tablespoons juice. Set aside. Peel and section tangerines into a small bowl. Set aside. Lightly coat a large skillet with nonstick spray. Season chicken with ground pepper. Cook chicken in skillet over medium-high heat for 5 minutes or until browned on both sides. Add broth, onions, basil, reserved peels, and lime juice. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Simmer covered for 8 minutes, or until chicken is tender and no longer pink. Remove chicken from skillet and keep warm.

For sauce, combine water and cornstarch; add to juices in skillet. Cook and stir often until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir for 2 minutes more. Add tangerine sections and any juice; heat through. Pour sauce over chicken and serve with short-grain brown rice or amaranth.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 270, Fat 6 g, Sodium 104 mg, Carbs 21 g,
Fiber 3 g, Protein 33.5 g

LOOKING FOR A HEART-HEALTHY SIDE DISH?

Slice cauliflower or turnips into quarter-inch pieces.

Place in a single layer in lined pan, spray with organic extra virgin olive oil, sprinkle with garlic or Italian seasoning, Celtic sea salt, freshly ground black pepper, and roast for 20 minutes at 400 degrees F.

(continued...)

My Top 20 Heart-Healthy Recipes

Beets with Garlic 6 servings

- 6 medium-sized organic beets
- 3 tablespoons organic light virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Organic Celtic sea or kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

Wash beets, trim off green tops, but do not peel. Boil until tender, about 30–45 minutes. Run cold water over the boiled beets, and when cool enough to handle, slip off the skins. Slice the beets and toss with the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 106, Total Fat 6.9 g, Sodium 78 mg, Carbs 10.3 g, Fiber 2 g, Protein 1.7 g

Harvest Trail Mix 10 servings

- 1/4 cup unsalted almonds
- 1/4 cup dry-roasted organic, non-GMO soybeans
- 1/4 cup dried dates, chopped
- 1/4 cups dried apples, chopped
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/4 cup unsalted peanuts
- 1/4 cup unsalted pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup unsalted sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup walnuts

Mix ingredients together in roughly equal proportions and store in an airtight container. Use within a month, because the oils in nuts can go rancid. One serving equals 2 ounces, or 1/4 cup.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 142, Total Fat 7 g, Sodium 38 mg, Carbs 16 g, Fiber 3 g, Protein 4 g

Steamed Vegetables 6 servings

- 4–6 Tbsp. water
- 2–3 medium carrots, sliced
- 2 medium zucchini, chopped
- 1 small bunch of broccoli, chopped
- 2 medium summer squash, chopped
- 1 dozen white mushrooms, chopped
- 1/4 head of cauliflower, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. dried garlic or 3 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. dried basil
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- Chopped parsley

Place the water in a wok or frying pan. Use a steaming rack or tray if available. Place the chopped vegetables and mushrooms into the wok or frying pan. Sprinkle garlic and crushed dried basil on top. Cover. Heat and steam for several minutes until the vegetables are tender, stirring frequently if not using a rack. When tender, sprinkle olive oil over the mixture and add pepper to taste. Sprinkle cheese and chopped parsley over the steamed vegetables.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 110, Fat 6g, Sodium 60 mg, Carbs 12 g, Protein 5 g

Flavorful Cabbage with Garlic 4 servings

- 1 small cabbage, rinsed and outer leaves removed
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup organic light virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preheat the oven to 400° F. Cut the trimmed cabbage into quarters and remove part of the central stem, leaving enough to hold the leaves together. Combine the garlic and oil in a shallow bowl. Bring a large quantity of lightly salted water to a rolling boil. Plunge the cabbage into the water and boil rapidly for 5–7 minutes, or until the cabbage starts to soften but does not get limp.

When the cabbage is done, drain it and immediately pour the garlic oil over each quarter, turning to coat. Place the cabbage in an oval gratin dish and sprinkle with pepper. Cover the dish with aluminum foil, and slide the dish into the oven for about 5 minutes, or just long enough to get the oil hot. Remove the foil and let the cabbages bake a little longer, no more than 5 minutes. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 125, Fat 10 g, Sodium 8 mg, Carbs 7 g, Fiber 3 g, Protein 3.5 g

(continued...)

COOKING TIP

Create a healthy meat and veggie mix kabob. Kabobs are a great way to incorporate a variety of nutritious foods, including mixed beef or free-range chicken speared with onions, tomatoes and zucchini, or any other fresh vegetables you like.



My Top 20 Heart-Healthy Recipes

Sea Vegetable Soup 4 servings

- 1 cup various sea vegetables (dulse, kelp, wakame, kombu, etc.)
- 3 quarts spring water
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame seed oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1-1/2 cups broccoli, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. marjoram
- Dash of cayenne pepper, freshly ground pepper, or ginger
- 2 Tbsp. miso
- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Optional ingredients: sliced shiitake mushrooms

Soak sea vegetables for 30 minutes and discard water (this takes out the excess sodium). Place in spring water and simmer. Sauté onion, carrot, broccoli, and garlic for 5 minutes, or until onions are partially translucent. Add vegetables to spring water with remaining ingredients except miso and parsley. Simmer for 30 minutes. Turn off heat. Remove 1/2 cup of liquid and dissolve miso in it. Return to soup and heat for 3 minutes. Do not boil. Adjust seasonings to taste. Garnish with parsley.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 143, Fat 11 g, Sodium 374 mg, Carbs 8 g, Fiber 4 g, Protein 2 g

Broccoli Soup 5 servings

- 5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 lb. fresh broccoli, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Black pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. curry powder to taste (optional)

Bring the stock to a boil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the broccoli, onion, and garlic and simmer until soft, about 30 minutes. Purée the soup in a food processor or blender, return to the pot, and add the lemon juice and pepper. For an extra kick of flavor, add the curry powder right before you purée the soup.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 123, Total Fat 3.5 g, Sodium 369 mg, Carbs 16 g, Fiber 4 g, Protein 9 g

Fruit Smoothie 1 serving

- 2 tsp. whole flaxseed, ground in a coffee mill
- 1-1/4 cups organic milk
- 8 organic strawberries, sliced
- 4 Tbsp. organic blueberries
- 1 tsp. honey
- 4 ice cubes
- 1/2 cups walnuts or almonds
- 2 tsp. chia seeds

Mix all ingredients in a blender.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 638, Total Fat 48 g, Sodium 128 mg, Carbs 41 g, Fiber 10.4 g, Protein: 20.9 g

Frittata a la Sinatra 6 servings

- 8 free-range, cage-free organic eggs
- 1 (10 oz.) package frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry or 10-12 oz. fresh organic spinach
- 1 red or yellow pepper, roasted and cut into strips
- 1/3 cup button, crimini, or shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 3 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup pitted Kalamata olives, sliced
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 Tbsp. fresh basil, chopped
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/8 tsp. Celtic sea or kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350° F. In large bowl, beat eggs. Stir in spinach, peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, olives, cheese, basil, pepper, and salt. Grease the bottom and sides of a large, oven-safe, nonstick skillet with organic butter or cooking oil. Add egg mixture and place skillet in oven. Bake for 35-40 minutes, or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.

Top with a drizzle of organic extra virgin olive oil, diced tomatoes, chopped basil or parsley, if desired, and serve.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
Calories 158, Total fat 10 g, Sodium 396 mg, Carbs 6 g, Fiber 2 g, Protein 11 g

(continued...)

SHOPPING TIP

Select your meats carefully and go grass-fed or organic as much as possible. Some of the best heart-healthy choices are beef, bison, and lamb. Instead of buying fatty hamburger meat, have your butcher grind up free-range, top round steak into burger meat.

My Top 20 Heart-Healthy Recipes

Asparagus with Tomatoes and Olive Oil 6 servings

- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/4 cup organic light virgin olive oil
- 1-1/2 lbs. fresh asparagus, ends removed and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
- Black pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice

In a large saucepan, cook the onion and garlic in olive oil until the onion is golden and starting to brown. Rinse the asparagus and add to the onions. Mix well, cover, and cook on medium-low for about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and pepper. Cover and cook about 40 minutes, until asparagus is soft and tomatoes have dissolved into a sauce. Stir in lemon juice. Serve warm. (Can be served over quinoa or short-grain brown rice.)

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
 Calories 125, Fat 10 g, Sodium 8 mg,
 Carbs 7 g, Fiber 3 g, Protein 3.5 g

Antiguan Black Bean Soup 6 servings

- 2 Tbsp. organic light virgin olive oil
- 1/2 green pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped and divided
- 1/2 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 pound dried black beans cooked according to product directions, or 2 (16 oz) cans black beans, drained
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 quarts water
- 1 cup short-grain brown rice, cooked
- Fresh parsley, chopped

In large saucepan, combine olive oil, green pepper, onion (reserve some raw onion as a topping), and garlic. Sauté until tender. Add precooked or canned black beans, pepper, vinegar, bay leaf, and water or broth. Simmer for 30-40 minutes. Top with raw onion, brown rice, and parsley.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
 Calories 228, Total Fat 5 g, Sodium <1 mg,
 Carbs 38 g, Fiber 8 g, Protein 10 g

Chicken Vegetable Soup 4 servings

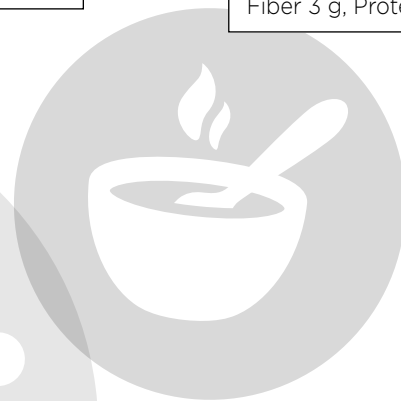
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 medium turnip, diced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp. tarragon
- 3 Tbsp. fresh chopped parsley
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1 Tbsp. gluten free Worcestershire sauce
- 5 cups low-sodium or reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 1 lb. chicken breast, cooked and chopped
- 1 medium zucchini, quartered and sliced
- 1 medium yellow summer squash, quartered and sliced

Place all vegetables except zucchini and summer squash with 3 cups of the chicken broth in a large pot. Cook covered over medium heat until vegetables are tender, about 30-40 minutes. Stir frequently to prevent sticking. Uncover and add rest of ingredients. Bring to boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
 Calories 213, Fat 4 g, Sodium 1,373 mg, Carbs 16 g,
 Fiber 3 g, Protein 30 g

HEART-HEALTHY SNACK IDEA: APPLE DIPPERS

Slice an apple into quarters, and top each slice with organic peanut or almond butter. The nutty butter mixed with the sweetness of the apple satisfies your hunger and your taste buds.



10 Ways to Lower Your Blood Pressure Naturally

High blood pressure is not something you want to ignore. Left unchecked, it can lead to poor heart, kidney, and eye health. But the good news is that there are many ways to improve your blood pressure.

1. Eat the right amount of salt.

While too much salt can elevate your blood pressure, too little salt can be equally problematic—especially if you have congestive heart failure. For heart failure patients, restricting salt to less than 1.8 g a day can cause blood pressure to soar even higher. When it comes to sodium, you want to strive to get less than 2.8 mg a day and be very careful about hidden salt in processed foods like canned soups, pickles, nuts, and more.

2. Increase your potassium intake.

If your blood pressure is high, it's important to eat foods rich in potassium. That's because potassium helps to relax the arterial walls and keep blood pressure in the healthy range. Good high-potassium foods include eggplant, squash, bananas, coconut water, and baked potatoes.

3. Get moving.

Studies show that moderate activities such as regular walking, dancing, swimming, golf, and tennis can reduce blood pressure levels

significantly. In fact, exercise is crucial for maintaining healthy blood pressure. If you haven't been active for a while, check in with your doctor then start out easy with just 10 minutes a day. Then, add five minutes a week to your walking regimen, building up to 30 minutes total, five days a week.

4. Take Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10).

Research shows that 200–300 mg CoQ10 per day can lower blood pressure. CoQ10 makes cells healthier and less vulnerable to constriction, which can elevate pressure inside blood vessels. Many of my patients who take a water-soluble form of CoQ10 have cut their use of blood pressure drugs in half, while maintaining healthy blood pressure.

5. Supplement with magnesium.

It's hard to get sufficient levels of magnesium in your diet alone, which is why supplementing is important. I recommend taking 400 mg of magnesium every day. Note: Take magnesium after meals. If you have kidney problems, don't take supplemental magnesium without your doctor's approval.

6. Up your omega-3 fish oil intake.

A study of 11,000 patients showed that fish oil promotes healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels—even better than vitamin E.

7. Eat more garlic.

Garlic acts similarly to ACE inhibitors to promote healthy blood pressure levels. A clove a day, chopped or minced in your food, is plenty. I recommend garlic itself, because I'm not convinced that powdered garlic capsules have all the herb's active ingredients. If you don't like garlic, 500–1,000 mg garlic in soft gel form is your best defense.

8. Take hawthorn.

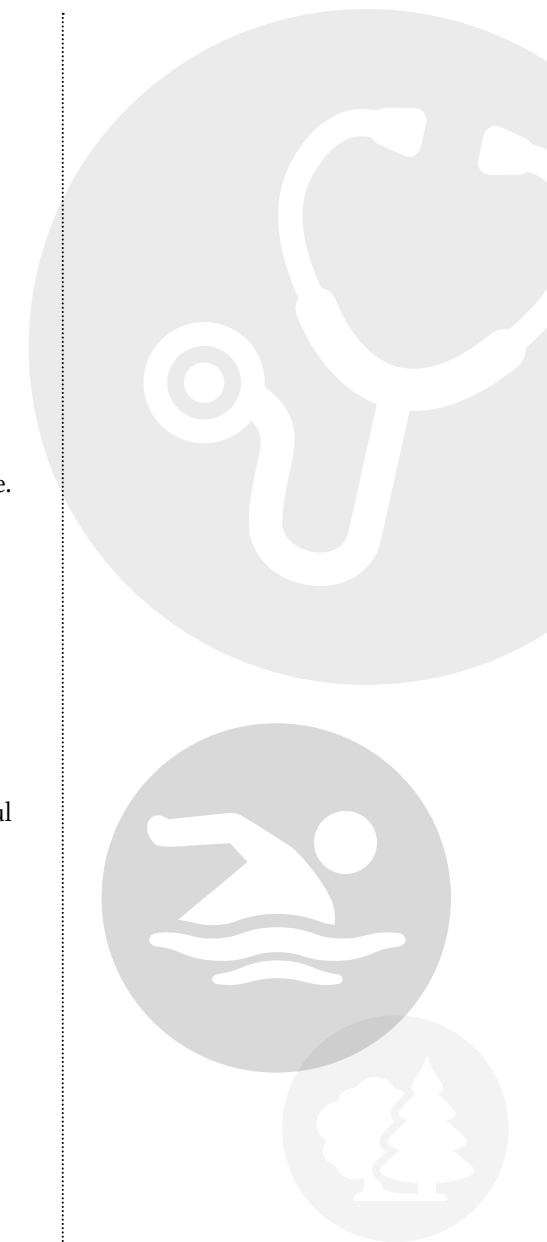
Studies show that hawthorn berry promotes blood flow in smaller vessels. It acts much like ACE inhibitors, preventing production of angiotensin 2, a powerful blood vessel constrictor responsible for increasing blood pressure. It also helps to ease angina and relieve congestive heart failure. Take 500 mg 2–3 times a day until you see results.

9. Try grounding.

Either by going barefoot on the Earth's surface, or using a grounding pad or sheet, grounding has a positive effect on blood viscosity and blood pressure. In fact, the positive effects of grounding on blood viscosity are so impressive that those on prescription blood thinners need to be careful when beginning a grounding program.

10. Reduce emotional stress.

Chronic emotional and mental stress is a big contributor to high blood pressure, because stress causes a sustained increase in the activity in the sympathetic nervous system—the part of your nervous system associated with the fight-or-flight response. When your sympathetic nervous system is activated, it floods your blood with cortisol and adrenaline, accelerating your heart rate, constricting your blood vessels, and increasing blood pressure. To diffuse stress, try meditation, yoga, or tai chi.



The 12 Most Powerful Nutrients for Heart Health

1. Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)

CoQ10 is a vitamin-like substance made in the body. Production declines with age and poor diet, and is significantly impaired by statin drugs. Inside our cells, electrons are extracted from the food we eat to produce ATP. CoQ10 molecules play a central role in that process by shuttling electrons back and forth between enzymes. The nutrient also doubles as a formidable free-radical scavenger, a critical property because ATP production is accompanied by some free-radical activity. CoQ10 protects cellular membranes and components, as well as arterial tissue, from oxidative stress and inflammatory damage.

Dosage: 50–100 mg per day to maintain heart health, 180–360 mg per day for individuals with hypertension or taking statin drugs, or 300–600 mg per day for heart failure. Take with meals.

2. L-carnitine

L-carnitine is a water-soluble amino acid–like compound found primarily in meat, especially lamb. The body also makes it. Inside the mitochondria, L-carnitine transports the fatty acids necessary to make ATP. This function is critical because the heart obtains 60 percent of its fuel from fat sources. Equally important, this compound carries out wastes from the mitochondria.

Dosage: Take 1,000–1,500 mg in divided dosages and on an empty stomach to prevent deficiency, and up to 3,000 mg for individuals with heart disease.

3. Magnesium

Inside cells, the biggest concentration of magnesium is found in the mitochondria. All enzymatic reactions involving ATP require magnesium. People get magnesium through diet (leafy green vegetables, almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds, beans, tofu, figs, apricots, and bananas) and mineral-rich hard drinking water. However, deficiency is rampant due to poor diet, emotional and physical stress, and long-term use of diuretics.

Dosage: Magnesium citrate, taurinate, or orotate are the best-absorbed supplement forms. Take at least 400 mg daily with meals.

4. D-ribose

D-ribose is a naturally occurring sugar that the body uses to make and burn ATP. Under certain cardiac conditions, including ischemic episodes that deprive the heart of oxygen, like angina and heart attack, a profound depression of ATP occurs. Individuals with ischemia have low levels of ribose, which compromises the heart's ability to re-synthesize and regenerate ATP.

Dosage: For individuals involved in moderate to intense exercise, take 5 g daily prior to activity; 10 g daily for mild heart failure and other forms of ischemic disease, and peripheral vascular disease; 10–15 g daily for those awaiting a heart transplant or with serious heart failure, dilated cardiomyopathy, frequent angina, fibromyalgia, or neuromuscular disease. Take in divided doses with meals.

5. Omega-3s

I've been recommending omega-3s for nearly 20 years. It is one nutrient I regard as absolutely essential for heart health and overall health in general. There are two types of omega-3s: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Your body requires both EPA and DHA for good health, but the newest research shows that DHA's benefits are far more powerful. Yet, the average American gets only about 120 mg of DHA per day. In other countries, like Japan, the average DHA intake is 600 mg per day—which researchers theorize helps contribute to the good heart health experienced by people in Japan.

Omega-3s support overall cardiovascular health and function, support normal blood pressure, help to promote healthy blood vessels, and normal blood lipid levels. Plus, they help the rest of your body by promoting cognitive health and memory function, and supporting eye health, lung function, and bowel health.

Dosage: I recommend taking 1–2 g of an omega-3 oil daily.

6. Nattokinase

Nattokinase is derived from the traditional Japanese soy product, natto. This supplement helps address one of the most overlooked problems in the development of arterial disease and high blood pressure: hyperviscosity, which refers to thick and sticky blood that moves slowly through the circulatory system. Hyperviscosity feeds the inflammatory process that damages arteries, and it also increases the risk of clot formation. Nattokinase reinforces the actions of plasmin, your body's own enzyme that breaks down the clotting agent called fibrin, thereby preventing abnormal thickening of the blood and helping to lower blood pressure.

Dosage: Start at 50 mg a day and raise the dose to 100 mg after a week. **Note that people taking pharmaceutical**

(continued...)

WHEN YOUR DOCTOR DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF SUPPLEMENTS

Over the years I've recommend certain nutritional supplements for heart health. Then, patients ask their other doctors about the supplements and often receive negative or indifferent answers such as, "they may cause harm," or "there's no science."

Such responses are cop outs, to put it mildly. There's an immense body of powerful research supporting the use and safety of supplements, and any smart doctor should certainly be up on the subject.

What should you do if your doctor disapproves of supplements?

- First off, don't be intimidated by the messenger. Tell your doctor if you've had a positive experience with certain supplements—convey your passion. Plus, bring in articles or books that contain relevant evidence.
- Keep in mind that medical doctors get little, if any, nutritional training in medical school and rarely attempt to fill their knowledge gap once in practice. Years ago when I was a hospital medical education director, I had a hard time trying to encourage my physician colleagues to accept nutritional medicine. Most were simply annoyed by my efforts. They demanded to see studies, which I didn't mind providing, but I had to spoon-feed them to make any progress.

(continued on page 71...)

The 12 Most Powerful Nutrients for Heart Health

blood thinners such as Coumadin (warfarin) should not take nattokinase because the combination may thin the blood too much.

7. L-arginine

L-arginine supports smooth muscle relaxation within the arterial wall. L-arginine is thought to be the primary source for the production of nitrogen molecules involved in maintaining the elasticity of blood vessels. Research has also shown that the health benefits of L-arginine may be helpful for people with high LDL cholesterol levels and for men who suffer from impotence.

Dosage: For optimal benefits, I recommend taking 2–3 g of L-arginine at bedtime to keep cardiovascular problems at bay. NOTE: Do not take L-arginine if you had a recent heart attack, within six months.

8. Hawthorn

Although hawthorn has been used medicinally for centuries, in the last 100 years it has become increasingly popular for cardiovascular health, including to lower blood pressure. Hawthorn acts in a fashion similar to a commonly prescribed class of high blood pressure medicines called ACE inhibitors, especially when combined with a garlic supplement. Specifically, the combination of hawthorn and garlic inhibits angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE), minimizing the production of angiotensin II, a powerful blood vessel constrictor responsible for increasing blood pressure.

Dosage: I recommend 1,000–1,500 mg daily of hawthorn taken in divided doses.

9. Niacin

If I had to pick one nutrient I receive the most questions about, it's niacin (vitamin B3). That's probably because many doctors, including cardiologists, are still in the dark about its protective benefits. Vitamin B3 is one of the best nutrients for raising “good” HDL cholesterol; reducing the small, dense LDL cholesterol particles that can clog your arteries; and reducing triglycerides. It's also the only nutrient that can decrease dangerous Lp(a) cholesterol particles.

Dosage: My recommendation for full vitamin B3 benefits is that you start with 250 mg of niacin three times daily, and slowly work up to 1–3 g in divided doses, three times a day. When you take niacin, you'll likely experience a tingly, “pins-and-needles” sensation and sometimes hot flushing of the skin. This typically lasts no more than a half-hour to an hour. The higher the initial dose, the greater the initial flushing effect. Some people use the non-flush form of niacin because they are uncomfortable with the flushing effect, but it doesn't give you the same vascular benefits.

10. Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for immunity, calcium absorption and utilization, insulin secretion, blood pressure, and heart muscle function and structure. The health risks of a vitamin D deficiency can be serious, and doctors now regularly test for it.

Epidemiological studies involving surveys and health databases have repeatedly linked

vitamin-D deficient blood levels to a higher risk of a number of cardiovascular-related issues including arterial stiffness, endothelial dysfunction, higher blood sugar, more fatal strokes, high blood pressure, and a higher risk of heart failures and heart attacks.

Dosage: Take 2,000 IU of vitamin D per day.

11. Vitamin C

Many people think vitamin C is an unimportant nutrient, but nothing could be further from the truth. Vitamin C can help to delay the onset of cataracts by 10 years. It also helps to promote immune, bone, and joint health. But perhaps most importantly, vitamin C supports your heart by helping to protect the arteries, strengthen the blood vessel walls, and improve vasodilation.

Dosage: I recommend taking 1,000 mg of vitamin C in the morning.

12. Vitamin E

Vitamin E is a must-take nutrient for your heart. It helps to prevent oxidation of LDL cholesterol, helps to thin the blood, stabilizes plaque, and improves vascular tone. Plus, vitamin E protects your lungs from environmental toxins, supports your vision, and more.

Dosage: Women should take 100 to 200 IU, and men should take up to 400 IU of vitamin E in the natural d-alpha tocopherol form, with mixed tocopherols, including gamma tocopherol. You also want to take it with antioxidants, including 50–100 mg of CoQ10, 100–200 mg of vitamin C and/or 50–200 mcg of selenium, to enjoy the full benefits of vitamin E.

WHEN YOUR DOCTOR DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF SUPPLEMENTS

(continued from page 69...)

What should you do if your doctor disapproves of supplements?

- Remember this revealing statistic: the American Association of Poison Control Centers reports 11 deaths supposedly from supplement use during the last 27 years. I say “supposedly” because the circumstances linking the supplements to actual deaths are questionable. This is a tremendous safety record.
- Also, remember how supplements compare to prescription drugs. A 2011 study reveals that each year in this country, adverse effects cause about 4.5 million visits to doctors' offices and hospitals. In fact, prescription drugs are our fourth leading cause of death, killing more than 27,000 people in 2007—more than heroin and cocaine combined.

10 Things You Need to Know About Strokes

Strokes go by many names, and there are a couple different types. But, simply put, a stroke is a cessation of blood flow somewhere in the brain. The loss of blood supply can last from a few seconds to the rest of your life, and can affect any area of the brain, large or small. In the old days, strokes used to be called “apoplexy,” but now they all come under the heady title of “cerebrovascular accident.”

The thought of you or a loved one suffering a stroke is very scary. I have firsthand experience with this. I was 13 when my paternal grandmother died from a massive stroke. In addition to causing death, stroke is major cause of serious long-term disability and suffering for patients and their families. Here are the 10 things you need to know about strokes.

1. Men tend to follow the textbooks.

Their strokes tend to present themselves with traditional stroke symptoms, including:

- Weakness in arm or leg or both on the same side
- Weakness in facial muscles with progression to one-sided facial droop
- Sudden headache
- Leg weakness or instability, or a gait stagger
- Imbalance in coordination: stumbling, difficulty walking or picking up objects
- Difficulty speaking and slurred speech
- Vision abnormalities: double vision or loss of vision in visual field on same side for both eyes
- Dizziness or vertigo
- Change in consciousness level

2. Women’s stroke symptoms tend to be “non-traditional.”

Symptoms for women can include:

- Facial pain or one-sided limb pain
- Nonspecific: chest pain, shortness of breath, palpitations
- Nonspecific neurological symptoms, such as hiccups, nausea and nonfocal/generalized weakness
- Unsteady gait and weakness

3. There are many risk factors for a stroke.

They include family history, advancing age, race (African Americans have higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and tobacco use, all of which are independent risk factors for stroke), high blood pressure, and atrial fibrillation. Plus, high inflammation marker scores, such as CRP, homocysteine, fibrinogen, and Lp(a) can raise your stroke risk.

4. Even mildly high blood pressure can increase your stroke risk.

Researchers at Southern Medical University in China examined results from 19 previous research studies on stroke risk and hypertension. What they found is that those with even slightly high blood pressure (120/80 mmHg) were at a 66 percent greater risk of having a stroke compared to those in the normal blood pressure range.

What’s also important is that the higher the blood pressure, the higher the stroke risk. Those individuals at the high end of pre-hypertensive—meaning they had a blood pressure over 130/85 mmHg—had a 95 percent higher stroke risk than those with normal blood pressure.

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“I was 13 when my paternal grandmother died from a massive stroke. In addition to causing death, stroke is a major cause of serious long-term disability and suffering for patients and their families. That’s why it’s important to educate yourself about the risks and symptoms.”

Stephen Sinatra M.D.



10 Things You Need to Know About Strokes

5. A PLAC test can measure your stroke risk.

Scientists have identified an enzyme called lipoprotein associated phospholipase A2 (Lp-PLA2 for short) that's involved in the inflammation of blood vessels. This inflammation contributes to both plaque formation and instability. Eventually the unstable plaque can rupture, turning potentially lethal clots and debris loose in your bloodstream—causing a stroke or a heart attack. If you have risk factors for stroke, especially high blood pressure, ask your physician to do a PLAC test. For more information on the test, visit the website at www.plactest.com.

6. With a stroke, time is of the essence.

For the best outcome, you want to seek treatment right away. If you think someone may be having a stroke, just remember the first four letters of the word “stroke” by asking these four things:

- **S:** Ask the person to SMILE.
- **T:** Ask him or her to TALK and speak a simple sentence coherently.
- **R:** Ask the person to RAISE both arms.
- **O:** Ask him or her to stick OUT their tongue, which should be straight.

If the person has trouble with any of these tasks, you want to call 911 immediately.

7. Strokes are on the rise among young people.

It used to be that only people over the age of 65 needed to worry about having a stroke. But a study published in the journal *Neurology* has reported that 15 percent of all strokes are now occurring in people between the ages of 15 and 44. The reason is that most strokes (85 percent) are ischemic, and people are developing risk factors for ischemic strokes at younger ages. These risk factors include obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The other problem is that in young people, stroke symptoms are often missed, delaying critical treatment.

8. The right healthy habits can reduce your stroke risk significantly.

For a study published in the journal *Neurology*, researchers at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden studied 31,696 women with an average age of 60. They asked the women to complete detailed questionnaires about their lifestyle, looking at five specific lifestyle factors:

- Body mass index (under 25 kg/m²)
- Moderate alcohol consumption (3–9 drinks per week)
- Physical activity (moderate exercise for at least 40 minutes a day, and vigorous exercise for one or more hours per week)

- Never smoking
- A healthy diet (eating at the top 50 percent of the recommended food score)

At the end of 10 years, they found that those participants who adhered to all five lifestyle factors had a 54 percent lower risk of stroke than those who didn't follow any of the lifestyle factors. Plus, those same participants had a 62 percent lower risk of cerebral infarction, a type of ischemic stroke.

9. Coffee can help to protect against strokes.

In a decade-long study of 34,670 Swedish women, those who had a daily cup of java had a lower risk factor for stroke than those who didn't.

10. Apples and pears can reduce your stroke risk.

A study in the Netherlands found that a high intake of fruits that are white inside—including apples and pears—reduced the risk of stroke by 50 percent. What the investigators found is that for each 25 g per day increase in white fruit and vegetable consumption was associated with a 9 percent reduction in stroke risk.



“It used to be that only people over the age of 65 needed to worry about having a stroke. But a study published in the journal *Neurology* has reported that 15 percent of all strokes are now occurring in people between the ages of 15 and 44.”

Stephen Sinatra M.D.



The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

Over the past 20 years, I've probably spent more time answering questions than any other task—at conferences and speaking engagements, in my newsletter, and online on my blog and Facebook page. Some of those questions are perennials; they're asked no matter where I am or what I'm talking about. Here they are:

1. Can I ever stop taking my Coumadin (warfarin)? Is there a natural alternative?

I probably field more questions about this drug than on any other topic.

My answer is always the same. If you have a prosthetic heart valve or atrial fibrillation with a leaky valve or enlarged left atrium, you must continue taking your Coumadin. There is no adequate natural blood-thinning substitute if you have those conditions.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the main reason Coumadin is prescribed. In patients with a normal heart rhythm, the upper chambers of the heart contract in unison in response to a signal from the sinus node.

In patients with AF, however, this response is overpowered by electrical signals scattered throughout the atria. Instead of contracting, the heart vibrates rapidly. Millions of people are affected by the condition, which raises risk of blood clots and therefore requires that patients take Coumadin.

The only exceptions to that rule are patients who have “lone” AF. That means you have atrial fibrillation but with normal valve function and heart size. Because these patients are at lower risk for a blood clot, they are good candidates for natural blood thinners such as an omega-3 rich squid or fish oil (2 g daily) and nattokinase (100 mg daily).

2. What supplements can, or can't, I take while I'm on Coumadin?

Don't take St. John's wort, garlic, nattokinase, and vitamin K at all, and don't take more than 200 IU of mixed tocopherols (vitamin E) or 2 g of fish or squid oil. You'll still want to eat green leafy vegetables for dietary vitamin K, but make sure that your INR (clotting factor) is checked routinely by your doctor, and that your Coumadin dosage is adjusted as needed.

3. I have a drug-eluting stent. My doctor says I have to take the blood-thinning drug Plavix for the long term. Is that true? Do I have options?

Unfortunately, you don't have another option at the present time. Until there's a new development, you will have to take Plavix for the rest of your life. Research has shown that if you go off Plavix, or substitute it with another drug, there is a small chance—about 3 percent—of your having a heart attack.

4. Which is the better form of CoQ10, ubiquinone or ubiquinol?

Ubiquinone is the commercially available CoQ10 compound and the one that I used with great success for years with my patients. Inside the body, ubiquinone is converted to ubiquinol, the active antioxidant form. In the last few years, the ubiquinol form has become available commercially, and some distributors claim it represents a major improvement—namely, that it is absorbed up to eight times better than ubiquinone.

You know how much I value CoQ10, so if there is a better version of it, I am all ears. To find out if there really is a difference, I decided to conduct an informal three-month study using the two forms. I enrolled 12 people that I randomly selected from my office staff or from shoppers in

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HERE'S HOW TO MANAGE YOUR HEALTH CARE

It's important to take proactive steps to manage our own health care. I'm not recommending that you act as your own doctor, or that you completely ignore your doctor's advice. But you need to be the one managing your life and your health.

- **Do your homework.** If you have high blood pressure, angina, diabetes, or another health concern, your doctor will obviously make specific recommendations. But the rationale behind those recommendations is often incomplete—leaving it up to you to identify the true risks and benefits. Have an honest discussion with your doctor about those recommendations and your alternatives. Ask questions, and make sure you understand the answers.
- **Start slow.** If a patient came to me with blood pressure higher than 180/100, or a blood sugar level in the 300s, you can bet that I'd start them on a medication right away to address the emergency situation. But for most people, starting off with the more drastic (and costly) measures of drugs, or even surgery, is totally unnecessary. Ask your doctor whether your case is an emergency, or whether you have time to let natural therapies work.

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The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

a health food store, and I had them take 200 mg of either ubiquinol or ubiquinone for a month. The following month, I had them take neither form, and then I switched them to the other form for the third month. I checked their CoQ10 blood levels before each monthly segment, as well as at the end of the three months.

I found that both forms of CoQ10 generated excellent blood levels. The ubiquinol form generated slightly better levels in most of the participants, but not in all of them. However, it was far from being eight times better.

After using ubiquinol for one month, several people reported fatigue, which they didn't have before my study. No one taking ubiquinone reported fatigue.

The results didn't convince me to convert to ubiquinol at this time. I would like to see more results and a larger study. However, I am having my research contacts look into this issue in more detail. Perhaps a combination of the two forms may be the best way to go. I'll follow this topic closely and keep you informed. For now, my jury is still out.

5. What is the best way to increase the strength of your heart?

You can improve the strength of your heart by giving the cells in the heart muscle the nutritional raw materials that support energy production. This is the basis of metabolic cardiology and, I've found, an effective way to improve not just the strength of your heart, but your overall health.

For cardiovascular strength, my nutritional short list includes the following: CoQ10 (50–100 mg, twice daily), broad-spectrum magnesium (400 mg daily with meals), D-ribose (5 g three times a day), and L-carnitine (1,000–1,500 mg daily, ideally from a broad-spectrum product that includes acetyl-L-carnitine, L-carnitine fumarate, and glycine propionyl-L-carnitine). These supplements make up my “Awesome Foursome” and work magnificently to energize the heart.

In addition to nutritional support, I also recommend regular exercise (at least 15 minutes a day) and some kind of regular stress reduction activity, such as tai chi, yoga, or meditation.

6. How would you treat a blockage in a carotid artery?

The main risk associated with a carotid blockage is a stroke. I'm not concerned about these blockages unless ultrasound testing shows occlusion of more than 80 percent of the artery and there are coexisting vision symptoms—for example, you may feel like you are looking through a dark veil or web, or you may see dark spots float across your visual field. When this combination of blockage and visual impairment is present, you should consider surgery.

When the carotid blockage is less than 80 percent and there are no vision-related symptoms, I would try a daily supplement regimen that supports optimal blood flow. Those include pomegranate juice (2 ounces diluted in 4–6 ounces of water), vitamin K2 (150 mcg of the MK-7 form two times a day), and squid or fish oil (1–2 g a day).

7. Do I really need to take a statin drug?

I've said for years that statins are a blessing and a curse. They do incredibly good things, but they also can have horrific side effects.

The main issue with a statin is this: You should never take a statin to lower a cholesterol number. The risk just isn't worth it, plus cholesterol is not the villain in heart disease. You will find cholesterol where calcification occurs, but the true underlying cause of disease is inflammation.

With regard to inflammation, this is where statins really shine; they are incredibly effective at reducing it. They also change the shape of red blood cells in a way that makes them less sticky. So, statin drugs work in two ways: they're potent anti-inflammatory agents and they make the blood less viscous—and they should be prescribed for those reasons.

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HERE'S HOW TO MANAGE YOUR HEALTH CARE

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- **Follow the plan.** Once you and your doctor have decided on a course of action, follow through. If the solution turns out to be medication, take your meds faithfully as directed. If it's a dietary change, more exercise, or quitting smoking, stick with that solution.
- **Track your health.** Once you begin a course of action, check regularly to see how it's working by keeping a log. Make sure your doctor knows how the plan is working for you, so you can make adjustments as needed. If a plan is not working the way you want, insist on a change. Remember, you're in charge.
- **Be careful.** Mistakes, such as receiving the wrong medication in the hospital or an unnecessary procedure, can be very damaging to your health—even deadly. Ask questions at every opportunity about what your doctor is doing and why, and what the alternatives are. If you're not in shape to ask on your own, have someone advocate on your behalf.
- **Most of all, make your health your hobby, as I do.** Take targeted nutritional supplements, eat well, exercise, detox, and keep your mind and body balanced with activities like yoga or Pilates. All of these positive lifestyle changes will help to keep you out of the hospital and lessen the frequency with which you need a doctor.



The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

Here are the specific criteria for who I believe should take statin drugs:

- Men less than 75, who have advanced cardiovascular disease, a stent or angioplasty, heart attack, a calcium score over 200, or diabetes
- Women with advanced disease who are becoming more symptomatic, especially women who have diabetes, or inflammatory mediators, such as high C-reactive protein
- Men and women with the genetic disease familial hypercholesterolemia who also have high cardiac risk

I would not use statins in patients over 75 because I don't feel the return is worth the risk. With elderly people, I'm more afraid of statins' known effects on the central nervous system and memory.

Finally, if you must take a statin, remember that you must also take at least 200 mg daily of supplemental CoQ10 to offset the drug's effects on your body's natural ability to produce that nutrient.

8. What do you think of red yeast rice? Can you take it instead of a statin?

Red yeast rice is essentially the same as a statin, but I don't really recommend it. Just like any drug, and especially statin medications, you have to be careful about side effects. If you're taking it on your own, you may not know what to look for.

If you're concerned about your lipid level, there are plenty of other choices, such as citrus bergamonte (1,000 mg a day) and/or niacin (2–3 g a day). And remember that the best cholesterol-reduction program is a high-fiber diet that contains lots of the phytosterols found in fruits and vegetables. (That's why vegetarians so seldom have a problem with high cholesterol.)

9. Can cholesterol be too low?

Yes! This is one aspect of cholesterol treatment that I wish more people were aware of. Because of cholesterol's essential role in supporting cellular health, hormone production, and brain function, I would be extremely reluctant to push an LDL level below 70, which many doctors recommend. Levels that are too low—even LDL—have been associated with cancer, aggression, cerebral hemorrhages, and amnesia. Too low cholesterol can also affect your ability to combat infection.

10. What special precautions should I take if I have a history of heart disease in my family?

There are a number of risk factors that can be transmitted genetically when it comes to cardiovascular disease. In addition to living the cleanest and most preventative lifestyle possible, I recommend keeping a close eye on the following four test numbers because when elevated, they contribute to what I call "toxic blood." (Refer to pages 6–8 for a list of the target ranges for each.)

- **Homocysteine** is a sulfur-containing amino acid that is highly toxic to blood vessels. It leads to endothelial dysfunction that result in accelerated aging, and it fuels inflammatory states that can cause atherosclerosis. For most people, a healthy lifestyle, a diet rich in foods that contain B vitamins, and folate supplementation can help to lower homocysteine levels. The key B vitamins to take are B6 and B12, but they should be included as part of a B-vitamin complex since they work best when taken together.
- **Lp(a)** is a highly inflammatory form of cholesterol that increases the stickiness of blood, which makes developing a blood clot much more likely. Blood clots, of course, cause heart attacks and strokes.

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The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

- **Fibrinogen** is a protein that enables your platelets to clump together and helps determine the stickiness of your blood. You need adequate fibrinogen levels to stop bleeding when you've been cut, but higher-than-normal levels have been associated with too much blood clotting.
- **C-reactive protein (CRP)** is a blood protein that, when found in elevated levels, may indicate elevated heart attack and stroke risk. CRP shows up when there is inflammation resulting from trauma or infection.

If coronary thrombosis runs in your family, I recommend a cholesterol fractionation test, as well. This test goes beyond the standard (and woefully insufficient) blood lipid tests that most doctors use to check cholesterol levels. These tests measure many different elements in your blood—including Lp(a)—and can help your doctor determine if there are patterns in your blood fats that may lead to inflammation.

I also recommend having your levels of fasting insulin and hemoglobin A1C checked. The results will help to determine whether you are at risk for metabolic syndrome—a widespread precursor to diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Finally, I would have some genetic testing done to check for the APO E4 allele. APO refers to a blood protein involved in fat metabolism, and alleles are combinations of genes. The presence of two alleles identified as E4 in these proteins suggests you may be susceptible to higher Lp(a) and triglyceride levels, lower HDL, and a higher risk of heart disease.

11. How can I raise my HDL cholesterol?

One of the best things you can do for your heart health is raising your HDL level. Ideally, your HDL cholesterol should be 50–90 mg/dL or greater. At a minimum, men should be at 35 mg/dL and women at 40 mg/dL or more.

If your HDL cholesterol is low, here's how to raise it:

- **Take niacin (vitamin B3).** Niacin is one of the most powerful nutrients available to raise HDL cholesterol. When you take niacin, you'll likely experience tingly, pins-and-needles and sometimes hot flushing of the skin. This typically lasts no more than a half-hour to an hour. The higher the initial dose, the greater the initial flushing effect. My recommendation is that you start with 250 mg of niacin three times daily, and slowly work up to 1–3 g in divided doses three times a day.
- **Get regular, physical exercise.** Strive for 30–60 minutes of aerobic activity three to five days a week.
- **Drink red wine in moderation.** Red wine helps to boost HDL cholesterol, plus it contains resveratrol, a phytonutrient with cardio-protective benefits.
- **Follow the PAM diet.** As always, the food you eat plays a big role in your heart—and overall—health. To avoid dips in your HDL levels, avoid processed foods, as well as those high in sugar and trans fats.

Instead, opt for foods that are rich in heart-healthy fats and soluble fiber. I particularly like extra virgin olive oil for raising HDL. I recommend getting 2–3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil a day in your diet. I even take a tablespoon at a time by mouth if I need to supplement. Remember to choose organic extra virgin olive oil as often as you can.

12. How can I lower my triglycerides?

Triglycerides are the chemical form of most fats in the body. The triglycerides in your blood come from dietary sources, primarily sugars and carbohydrates. Levels above 180 mg/dL have been linked to coronary artery disease and metabolic syndrome, which is why it is so important to learn how to lower your triglyceride levels.

If your triglycerides are on the high side, here are three recommendations that will bring them down:

- **Eat better.** Specifically, you want to cut back on the amount of sugar and carbohydrates in your diet, and eat more healthy fats and lean protein. It's my opinion that combining the healthy eating of Mediterranean cultures with traditional Asian cuisine offers the most heart-healthy diet of all. I call this approach to eating the Pan-Asian Mediterranean diet, or PAM diet, and it's one of the best ways to lower your triglyceride levels. (*See pages 41 and 43*)
- **Keep your weight down.** The lower your weight, the lower your triglycerides, so weight loss and weight management are key for lowering triglyceride levels. And since one of the best weight-management tools is exercise, I strongly recommend exercising regularly.

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CARDIOLOGIST

1. Look for a cardiologist who is F.A.C.C. Board Certified.

This designation means the cardiologist is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology. To earn this designation, the cardiologist must complete required training, successfully pass board certification and receive sponsorship from other F.A.C.C. certified cardiologists attesting to their professional competence in the field of cardiology. Similar designations are given by cardiology boards throughout the world.

2. Make sure the cardiologist is truly integrative.

This means he or she is just as knowledgeable about alternative therapies, dietary interventions, and nutritional supplements as he or she is about conventional drugs and surgery. A key question to ask when interviewing a cardiologist is whether he or she advocates taking CoQ10, L-carnitine, and D-ribose. If he/she doesn't recommend any of these nutrients, keep on looking.

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The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

- **Take omega-3 essential fatty acids.** Essential fatty acids (EFAs) help lower triglyceride levels. One popular way to get your EFAs is by taking fish or squid oil supplements, which can be found at health-food stores and grocery stores. But because our ocean waters are getting more polluted, fish can be contaminated with heavy metal and toxic chemicals; and the large factory ships that catch the fish don't do a very good job of processing it right away, which means oils can oxidize even before they're put into capsules. So look for a product that can guarantee freshness, preferably one that includes antioxidants such as rosemary extract and vitamin E to ensure stability and freshness. For triglyceride support, try 2–3 g daily in divided doses.

13. Do I really need bypass surgery?

I advise having bypass surgery when blocked arteries lead to an unsatisfactory quality of life or a high risk of heart attack. “Unsatisfactory” in this case means:

- Frequent bouts of angina
- Shortness of breath with minimal exertion (often referred to as an anginal equivalent)
- The inability to walk up a short flight of stairs, enjoy a game of golf, or play with the grandkids
- Unsatisfactory quality of life

A good supplement regimen can help improve these symptoms, but people whose lives are so limited aren't in a position to wait for the gradual relief that the right supplements and medications can generate. They need to fix their plumbing first and view alternative options as a means to prevent disease from recurring. If the coronary artery is severely blocked and you are symptomatic, it's time to open up the blood vessel and increase blood flow.

Some cardiologists may prefer stents over open heart surgery, but I disagree when more than one or two stents are required. Surgical patients fare better than stented patients in both the short and long term, especially those who are diabetic. Even multiple bypasses are better than multiple stents. However, I do endorse the use of a single stent or two if it means you can avoid having your chest opened up.

Amazingly, there are patients who have effective heart function and a good quality of life despite being riddled with coronary artery disease. We look at their angiograms and wonder how they do so well when their vessels look like rosary beads. I take a wait-and-see approach in these situations. Oftentimes, the right combination of supplements and medication can jumpstart improvement.

14. I have been diagnosed with mitral valve regurgitation. What do you recommend to maximize my cardiovascular health?

First, here's some cardiac geography. The mitral valve is one of the four valves separating the heart chambers, and it's located between the left atrium (the top chamber) and the left ventricle (the lower chamber). Oxygenated blood flows from the lungs into the left atrium, and then through the mitral valve into the ventricle. From the ventricle, blood is pumped out through the aorta and into the rest of the body.

Mitral valve regurgitation (also called mitral insufficiency or incompetence) occurs when the valve doesn't close as tightly as it should and some of the blood spills backward into the atrium. As a result, your heart is less efficient and you may suffer from fatigue and shortness of breath.

About one out of five people over age 55 has some degree of valve regurgitation. For mild cases, treatment may not be necessary. More severe cases may lead to heart failure or serious arrhythmias, and may require surgery.

The most important preventive measure you can take is to keep your blood pressure in a healthy range, ideally less than 120/80. The higher the systolic pressure—that is, the first number in blood pressure readings—the more blood that can leak backward into the atrium.

To support optimum blood pressure, the two most important factors are normal weight and stress reduction. Nutritional supplements also work well. I recommend hawthorn berry (1,000 mg), garlic (1,000 mg), magnesium (400–800 mg), L-arginine (up to 4 g), and nattokinase (50–100 mg). Research has also shown that CoQ10 may promote normal blood pressure levels (I would try 160–240 mg). Any one or more of these supplements can be helpful. But if one of these natural approaches doesn't work, you may need to take a pharmaceutical blood pressure medication prescribed by your doctor.

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CARDIOLOGIST

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3. **Find a cardiologist who treats the whole person.** Unfortunately, the sad fact is that most cardiologists do treat the heart like a piece of machinery. But when it comes to heart disease, emotions are just as important as what's occurring physically. So, you want to find a cardiologist who takes a holistic approach and acknowledges that your emotional state can enhance your recovery from heart disease.
4. **Ensure that you find a cardiologist who is compassionate and interested in you.** During your first office visit, notice if he/she looks directly at you and touches you in a caring way. Many doctors these days don't. Does he/she smile and appear to be connecting with you and your struggle? Does he/she inspire you to take care of yourself?
5. **Determine if the cardiologist is flexible and willing to learn.** Unfortunately, many doctors treat their patients with blinders on, unwilling to explore new treatments. I've always regarded patients who present me with new ideas as opportunities for me to learn and expand my practice. I never dismiss a new treatment out of hand. Instead, I use it as a chance to seek out new information and grow my repertoire of alternative treatments.



The 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

15. Are there any nutritional supplements that should be avoided when taking a beta blocker or ACE inhibitor?

Beta blockers lower blood pressure and heart rate, calm the body, relieve angina, and help the heart beat regularly. ACE inhibitors relax constricted arteries and reduce blood pressure.

If you take beta blockers, I don't see any problems with also taking supplements. I would remind you, however, that beta blockers, like statins, deplete the body of CoQ10. Whenever you take a beta blocker, you should also take at least 30–100 mg of CoQ10 per day. If you take an ACE inhibitor, you should not take large doses of zinc (more than 30 mg per day).

16. Which is worse, high CRP or high Lp(a)?

Lp(a) is a cholesterol fraction that carries out repair work in the body. However, when present at an abnormally high level, it is a serious inflammatory and thrombotic agent. In my opinion, it is the most dangerous cardiovascular risk factor—more so than CRP—and people with high Lp(a) are at greatly increased risk for arterial disease, especially women.

CRP is a biochemical marker of inflammation in the body and, when elevated, it is a more meaningful indicator of risk than simple high cholesterol. Remember, the main cause of cardiovascular disease is inflammation. CRP, which is monitored through standard blood tests, indicates whether you have silent inflammation. Excess Lp(a), on the other hand,

can cause inflammation. To have your Lp(a) checked, ask your doctor for a cholesterol fractionation test. These tests provide more relevant information than the standard blood lipid panel.

17. How can I lower my Lp(a)?

Lp(a) is a devastating form of cholesterol that promotes inflammation and clotting. You don't hear much about it because the pharmaceutical industry doesn't have any products to lower it.

High Lp(a) is often genetic, so if you have a family history of early coronary disease, it's important to check for Lp(a).

It is difficult to lower a high Lp(a) level, but you can help neutralize its effects by avoiding foods with trans fatty acids and sticking to a supplement program. I recommend taking the following:

- Niacin, 250–500 mg three to four times daily (it may cause facial flushing)
- Vitamin C, 500–1,000 mg or more, daily
- Fish oil, 1–2 g, daily
- Nattokinase, 100 mg, daily (If nattokinase is not sufficient, try Boluoke from Canada, one capsule twice a way)

Additionally, women should consider natural estrogen replacement, and men should avoid soy (which mimics estrogen) and consider testosterone therapy. Bioidentical estrogen and testosterone lower Lp(a).

18. What is EECP, and is there any value in it?

Enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP) is a non-invasive therapy that improves the flow of oxygenated blood in patients with heart failure or recurrent/inoperable coronary artery disease. The technique involves applying air pressure to the lower extremities to push blood from the legs toward the heart. It has a number of benefits, including making the energy-starved heart less stiff, increasing ejection fraction, and increasing the size of the collateral blood vessels in the heart—creating natural bypasses around coronary arteries.

I didn't personally use EECP in my practice, but I referred many patients to cardiologists who do the procedure.

19. Is it normal—or even possible—to have different blood pressure readings on different arms?

For some people, a blood pressure difference between the two arms is normal. Doctors should note it on your medical record, and track it accordingly on both sides. They will usually take an average of the two blood pressure readings.

20. What do you think of chelation as a way to reduce plaque buildup in the arteries?

IV chelation will take out heavy metals and improve circulation. Another way for plaque reversal is vitamin K2 (150–300 mcg a day). For more information, I recommend reading my book, *Reverse Heart Disease Now*, which gives an in-depth discussion on plaque reversal.



The Top 10 Cardiology “Game Changers” That Will Affect Your Health in the Coming Decade

When I started practicing cardiology years ago, taking coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) was a very new concept—but it changed cardiology. So, what will be the “game changers” in the coming decade? Here are the top things I think we’ll be hearing a lot more about in the next ten years.

1. The impact of metabolic syndrome and obesity

Recently, I read a statistic that more than one-third of all U.S. adults are obese, which is alarming! Obesity—and type 2 diabetes, which often results from obesity—have reached epidemic proportions in our country. The good news is that we have the power to reverse this trend through exercise, healthy eating, and weight loss.

2. Adipose-derived stem cells to heal the heart

Right now, adipose-derived stem cells are being used outside the United States to not only treat heart disease, but arthritic musculoskeletal and neurological disorders. For this treatment, abdominal fat cells are removed by liposuction; then the stem cells are teased out and re-injected into your body intravenously—recharging all of the cells in your body. I’m convinced that this is going to be a real “game changer” for cardiology in the coming decade as they are being injected into the heart.

3. The power of metabolic cardiology

As many of you know, metabolic cardiology means recharging the body’s ATP (energy) through a combination of nutrients I call the “Awesome

Foursome”: L-carnitine, magnesium, D-ribose, and CoQ10. We know that metabolic cardiology heals the heart, but new research has shown that it also bides time for the body’s intrinsic stem cells to take over and heal the body.

4. The increasing importance of targeted nutritional supplements

In addition to the “Awesome Foursome” in metabolic cardiology, there are other supplements that are extremely important for improving health. Some of the top supplements I recommend are pycnogenol and bentofiamine for blood sugar support. Plus, omega-3s, vitamin C, broad-spectrum vitamin E, broad-spectrum B vitamins, and supplemental minerals play an important role in my healing chest of medicine.

5. Grounding

One of the greatest discoveries ever made, grounding to the Earth not only thins the blood, but also improves and balances the autonomic nervous system. Plus, grounding improves heart rate variability, regulates the stress hormone cortisol, and reduces inflammation. With the continuing influx of wireless technology, this is going to become increasingly important.

6. The impact of EMFs on heart rate variability

Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and other chaotic forces in the environment are having deleterious effects on the cardiovascular system. Cellular and cordless phones can elicit an arrhythmia within seconds! Plus, animal data is showing there is DNA destruction from wireless technologies.

Listening to our bodies, reducing the use of technology, and grounding will be critically important for sustaining our heart health in the future.

7. Olive oil to heal the heart

The research on olive oil is expanding rapidly. Not only does this golden oil support “good” HDL cholesterol, it thins the blood, lowers blood pressure, and makes LDL cholesterol less invasive. Olive oil also lowers pro-inflammatory genes and inflammation in the body. In fact, medicinal olive oil may be a treatment for heart failure in the future. I recommend 1–2 tablespoons a day as an elixir, and studies show four tablespoons a day results in fewer cardiovascular events.

8. The fat-sugar connection

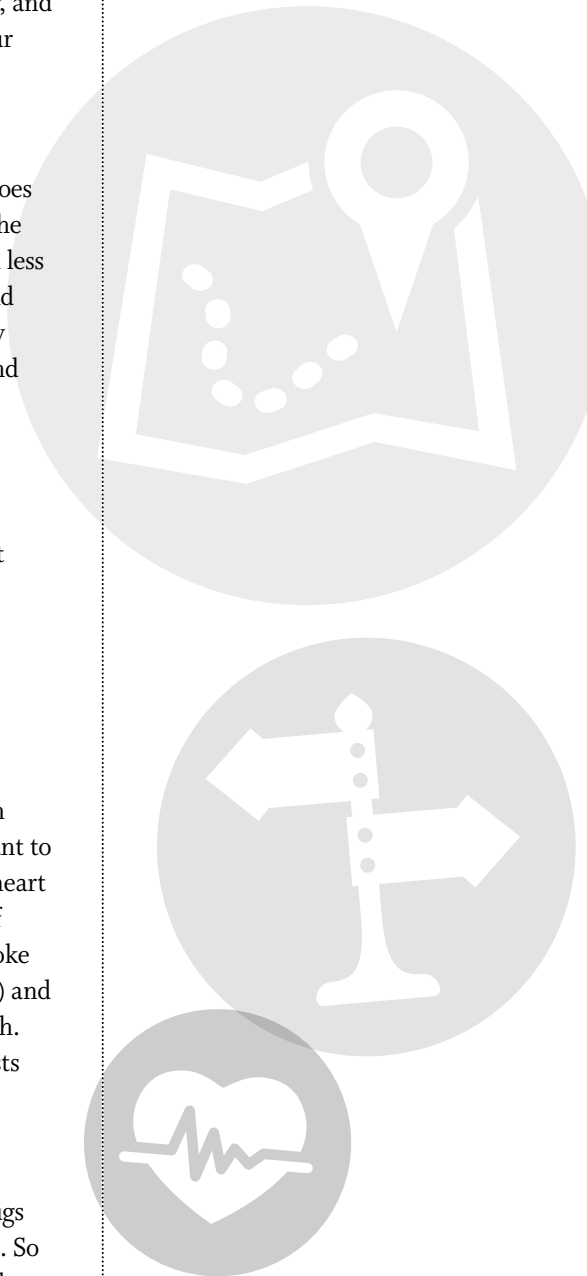
Sugar, not fat, is the kingpin of inflammation and heart disease. So reducing (or better yet, eliminating) sugar and simple carbohydrates from your diet is extremely important. You also want to add good fats to your diet, including olive oil, organic butter, and coconut oil.

9. Newer diagnostic tests

The problem with cardiovascular disease is that sudden cardiac death can be the first symptom. So, it’s important to be proactive with people who have family histories of heart disease and diagnose and treat problems early. Some of the best and newest tests include the PLAC test for stroke risk, and electron-beam computed tomography (EBCT) and computed tomography (CT) for assessing arterial health. Even with a little bit of radiation, these noninvasive tests can pick out people who are at risk.

10. “Pharmacologicpia”

This Sinatra-made word means overmedicating. Yes, drugs can be saviors, but they can also have serious side effects. So it’s important to limit medications where possible. Simple lifestyle practices can often do the trick far more safely.



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20
YEARS

OF INTEGRATIVE
HEART HEALTH
SOLUTIONS

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