



Living a Heart-Healthy Life

“ *About 610,000 Americans die from heart disease each year, that’s 1 in every 4 deaths and more than half of these deaths are men.*

— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in America and it is estimated that one million Americans have a heart attack each year. The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease, which can lead to heart attack.¹ Men and women may experience the symptoms of heart disease differently i.e., typical chest pains along with pain radiating to the jaw and arm for men and abdominal pain, nausea, and fatigue for women. Many times individuals who die suddenly of coronary heart disease have no previous symptoms², therefore it is important for everyone to understand the root causes and known related disease conditions.

For decades now, we have believed the myths pertaining to the true causes of heart disease and took the advice of doctors overly eager to prescribe toxic cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins, known to have serious side effects. There was even debunking of these myths voiced back as early as 2004 in an editorial published in the Journal of American College of Cardiology by Sylvan L. Weinberg, who at that time was the former president of the American College of Cardiology. He wrote that, *“The low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet... may well have played an unintended role in the current epidemics of obesity, lipid abnormalities, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic syndromes. This diet can no longer be defended by appeal to the authority of prestigious medical organizations.”*³ Unfortunately, under the standard of care model practiced here in America, we’ve been steered away from natural remedies and therapies that can assist in preventing or even reversing the disease process.

Causes of Heart Disease: *Forget Some Old Myths*

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— J of Am College of Cardiology 2004;731-733

Over the years, we have come to associate many things with high risk for heart disease—cholesterol, eggs and fat being the biggest villains. Given the new research on heart disease, it seems we have been somewhat misinformed about heart disease “bad guys”, that turn out to be actually good for our overall health. We’ve come to understand several important facts: 1) that cholesterol and saturated fat are *not* the primary causes of heart disease and 2) that widely-prescribed statin drugs used to lower cholesterol levels don’t reduce the risk of death and have dangerous side effects that can lead to further health complications.



If the old myths about heart disease have proved to be incorrect, why is cardiovascular disease often times misdiagnosed by doctors and what are the real causes? Understanding heart disease can be convoluted and we have to go beyond our thinking that there is one particular culprit creating so many health challenges. In truth, it is not just your cholesterol level that causes many heart problems. We have to consider that damage to the inside lining of our arteries caused by “agents of inflammation” e.g., oxidation forming plaque, stress, infections, poor nutrition and chemicals, is at the heart of this health epidemic.

Eating Cholesterol Is Not Going to Give You a Heart Attack



Egg or cholesterol intakes were not associated with increased coronary artery disease (CAD) risk, even in highly susceptible individuals.

— Am J Clin Nutr 2016;103:895–901

For the past decades, the biggest heart disease villain has been cholesterol. Doctors and the medical community at large would have us believe that biomarkers on tests for cholesterol solely determine our risk for cardiovascular disease. Unfortunately those numbers are often used to compare us to an artificially preset-threshold that when reached, dictates that our doctor may simply write a script for a statin drug like Lipitor and send us merrily on our way until next year’s annual exam. When *all* the research is considered, longer-term studies just haven’t shown a conclusive association between saturated fat intake and blood cholesterol levels.

Another popular food myth is that eating eggs raises your cholesterol making you a higher risk for heart disease. A recent study conducted in Finland noted that eggs were beneficial i.e., they are a rich source of anti-inflammatory compounds (bioactive phospholipids) that actually help reduce free radical damage leading to plaque build up, inflammation and tissue destruction.⁴ In particular, egg yolks are a good source of choline, which plays a vital role in many biological activities including producing neurotransmitters, detoxification and the upkeep of healthy cells. The Finish researchers believe and their study concurs, that cardiovascular disease is caused by excess inflammation that leads to increased free radical damage of the fat cells lining the arteries.⁵

Saturated Fats Are Not Our Dietary Enemies

The FDA and the medical community with the aid of mass media and giant food companies, has told us for years that “fat is bad” and we should reduce our intake to reduce risk of heart disease. But there are many benefits from eating plenty of “good” fats from sources such as nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, hazelnuts, and macadamias), olive oil, cold-water fish, dark chocolate and avocado, while reducing consumption of the “bad” fats like partially hydrogenated fats i.e., trans fats and rich vegetable oils. We need these good fat because they help reduce inflammation, produce hormones and healthy cells, absorb vitamins and aid in



balancing blood sugar levels. If we cut out the good fats from our diet, we actually increase risk for developing plaque in our arteries, which is actually now understood to be derived primarily from high blood sugar and inflammation. On the other hand, bad fats like trans fats are commonly used in processed foods so that they can stay on the shelf longer, which is not a comforting fact as this means they are apt to be problematic in the long run for us.

Our body is extremely resilient and it undergoes a certain amount of normal “wear and tear”. But when we overburden it with overly processed foods high in sugar, low in Omega-3 fats and high in Omega-6 fats especially those found in cooking oils like corn, safflower, sunflower, grapeseed, flax, and soybean, we dramatically increase risk for cellular damage and the formation of arterial plaque. This is why we tend to recommend a diet that increases healthy Omega-3 fats from natural and organic sources and reduces processed foods that include an over abundance of sugar, grains and Omega-6 fats.

The Misinformation About Statins



Approximately 1 in every 4 adult Americans over 45 is currently using these drugs (statin drugs) to "prevent heart disease".

— Sayer Ji, Founder, GreenMedInfo.com

Today we are a lot smarter about what causes heart disease, but unfortunately many medical practitioners still adhere to outdated research and scientific evidence. Take for instance statin drugs that for over 4 decades have propagated the myth that cholesterol leads to the build up of plaque in the arteries, eventually “clogging up” our vital blood pathways. This notion has come under scrutiny in recent years by researchers and doctors alike that are determined to get at the root causes of heart disease.

Statins are the leading drugs for treating cardiovascular disease and a recent publication showed that statin treatment increased the risk of type 2 diabetes by 46% and was linked to decreases in insulin sensitivity (pre-cursor to type 2 diabetes) and insulin secretion.⁶ There have been other studies showing correlations between statin drug use and weakened heart muscle, nerve damage, hypertension, and kidney disease.⁷ In all honesty, statin drugs seem to achieve their goal of limiting the amount of cholesterol produced in the body therefore lowering the amount that can be measured in the blood. But, we have to carefully weigh the pros/cons and ponder *the real trade-offs between the adverse side-effects of statins and their purported benefits.*

What’s Inflammation Got To Do With Cardiovascular Disease?

Inflammation, especially low-grade levels, is closely linked to all stages of atherothrombosis (the formation of a blood clot within an artery), which is the underlying cause of approximately 80% of all sudden cardiac death.⁴ This means that even small amounts of prolonged inflammation can



set the stage for heart attack, stroke, narrowing of the arteries to the extremities, stomach, and head, and even a type of dementia.

Inflammation is not a contagious disease and doesn't just happen overnight in the body. It is a naturally occurring daily activity and our body's normal way to help fight foreign invaders like viruses and infections. But some diet and lifestyle factors play a larger role in causing systemic inflammation in the body namely: a diet high in sugar, fat and processed foods and low in vegetables and fiber, constant high stress, environmental pollutants, toxins and chemicals, and lack of exercise.

When we discuss inflammation in the context of root causes of heart disease, we have to consider the health of our gut. We now can draw on studies showing that the microbes in our gut play an active role in the development of atherosclerosis and other complications of heart disease⁸. Therefore, a person's diet and overall approach to nutrition is paramount to helping to prevent chronic disease from taking root.

There are some key things that destroy the gut bacteria and further lead to the loss of our immune system's ability to do its job:

- Known food allergens like gluten, dairy, soy
- Poor diet (including excess sugars and carbs, but low on Omega-3 and fiber)
- Antibiotics, NSAIDS and Vaccines
- Parasites and bacteria/yeast overgrowth
- GMO foods (glyphosate found in the herbicide RoundUp)
- Method of birth delivery (vaginal vs. c-section)
- High levels of recurring stress.

Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease *Naturally*



You can reverse heart disease with nutrition, according to a growing body of scientific research.

— Sayer Ji, Founder, GreenMedInfo.com

Cardiovascular disease is still the #1 cause of death in America. We have to ponder why this is so when it can be prevented most of the time. If we take a longer view on the development of the disease, we can see the signs of heart disease well in advance, years or even decades before it becomes a chronic health issue. You can prevent the causes of heart disease from taking root by implementing some simple health-promoting steps and living a more health-conscious life.



Most people do not know that there is a great deal of medical information that supports natural approaches to preventing and even reversing heart disease. All too often we don't take the time to do the research and ask our doctors tough questions, rather we take the easy-way-out spending millions of dollars on toxic cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Natural remedies for reducing the risk of heart disease:

- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** – obtained from clean, non-rancid sources like cold-water fish, nuts, and avocados. There is a robust body of research indicating that the risk of sudden cardiac death is reduced when consuming higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids. One study reported that, *"The n-3 fatty acids found in fish are strongly associated with a reduced risk of sudden death among men without evidence of prior cardiovascular disease"*⁹
- **Vitamin D** – this vitamin has several important functions: regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorous, helping the immune system function normally, growth and development of bones and teeth, as well as improving resistance against certain diseases. Research published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology in 2009 confirmed that lower vitamin D levels are associated with increased all-cause mortality with the effect being even more pronounced with cardiovascular mortality¹⁰
- **Magnesium** - a powerful nutrient that influences the growth of arterial plaque and play's a primary role in protecting against heart disease. It also works as a natural blood thinner
- **Fiber** – daily intake from natural and clean sources such as vegetables, fruits, beans, and nuts, are good sources of soluble fiber. Other foods with a strong level of fiber like oatmeal, prunes, bananas, barley, kidney beans, also work to clean your arteries
- **Potassium** – like its heart-health twin magnesium, this mineral helps with muscle contraction. It also assists in lowering high blood pressure that makes atherosclerosis more likely. Good sources are beans, yogurt, fruits and vegetables, and sustainable seafood.

Surprising natural arterial plaque reducers:

- **B-Complex** – we can't say enough about this family of important nutrients. Not only do these vitamins help combat the by-products of stress, they have been shown to not only reduce the progression of plaque buildup in the arteries but also actually *reverse it*
- **Pomegranate Juice** – considered by some to be the 'Roto-Rooter' for the arteries. A recent study showed that pomegranate juice reversed "intima media thickening" (a root cause of atherosclerosis) and reversed plaque build up in the carotid arteries by 13% in just 3 months¹¹
- **L-Arginine** - is a key nutrient that helps to promote good blood flow and overall cardiovascular function. It is considered to be one of the "semi-essential" amino acids—meaning, you have to acquire this mostly from the foods you eat such as: turkey, chicken, pumpkin seeds, soy beans, spirulina, peanuts, dairy, chickpeas and lentils



- **Garlic** - Not only has garlic been found to reduce a multitude of risk factors associated with arteriosclerosis, but also it significantly reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke. Recent studies of aged garlic extract have shown it to be a, “*modulator of multiple cardiovascular risk factors such as blood pressure, plaque formation, total cholesterol, LDL oxidation, smoking-caused oxidative damages, and directly suppressed atherosclerosis*”.¹²

As a preventative measure, we can look at a marker of inflammation in the body called C-reactive protein (hsCRP), which is a protein made by the liver. C-reactive protein levels increase in the body when there is an infection, cancer, diabetes or when we take certain pharmaceutical drugs. Even though elevated hsCRP levels are not considered a primary risk factor used by many doctors, it still is considered to be an adequate predictor of long-term risk for having a heart attack or stroke, high blood pressure development, vascular disease and sudden cardiac death. We often recommend the use of an hsCRP assay to screen for inflammation and other risk factors.

If You Want to Learn More About Natural Approaches to Preventing Heart Disease

Discover more about natural approaches to preventing or reversing heart disease or how you can live an empowered and healthy life full of vitality and joy, by signing up for our [Wellness Foundations 1 & 3](#) programs where we will discuss your health goals and current challenges you are experiencing.

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