



Volume 7 Issue 09

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## **Our President's Personal Health Matters**

All voting US citizens will have to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of John McCain and Barack Obama when voting November 4, 2008 to choose the President of the United States. The personal health of these two candidates will play a determining role in their performance over the next four to eight years. This grueling job requires the highest level of physical and mental fitness. A serious disability or the death of our national leader during office would disrupt the function of our government and require the vice-president to take office.

The president's personal health will affect his (or her) policies and decisions. Our views are biased by our own personal habits. More to the point, people have a hard time seeing beyond their own dinner plates. A president interested and knowledgeable about good diet and exercise habits, not only incorporates this wisdom into his own life, but will also share this understanding with others. The impact will be as far reaching as national healthcare (health insurance), the USDA, the FDA, the EPA, the diet of the military, the school lunch programs, the pharmaceutical industry, the global impact of livestock on the environment, health education, and your own personal doctors' practice of medicine. **PAGE 2**

## **Report from the September 5 to 7, 2008 Advanced Study Weekend**

Over 100 people attended this biannual McDougall event in Santa Rosa, California. As always the enthusiasm, education, food, and friendship were over the top—far greater than anyone expected. A great slide show of over 90 photos included. **PAGE 6**

## **Featured Recipes**

All of the following recipes were demonstrated (and tasted!) during the McDougall Celebrity Chef Weekend in June, 2008.

- Garden Potato Medley
- Potato and Kale Soup
- Garden Vegetable Stew
- Spicy Red Hummus
- Harlequin Rice
- Tex-Mex Pasta

## Our President's Personal Health Matters



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For all the above reasons you need to be well aware of, and take into serious consideration, the personal health and health habits of McCain and Obama when you cast your vote.

I consider it to be my obligation to my newsletter subscribers, and especially to my patients, to share with you the facts that I have gathered about our candidates and my opinion as to how their health and habits may affect their ability to serve you and the rest of our nation.

### The Candidates' Personal Health Habits

#### Their Diet:

McCain: February 25, 2008 the *New Yorker* magazine describes John McCain's campaign bus as "stocked with Dunkin' Donuts and Coke, the staples of the McCain diet." He grabs a candy bar or a bag of potato chips while he engages reporters for interviews. The Senator has been said to have a weakness for Butterfinger candy bars, jellybeans, coffee, and doughnuts.

Obama: Most candidates gain weight on the campaign trail, however, Obama has lost about 5 pounds, following what he believes to be a healthy diet of salmon and broccoli.

#### Their Exercise Programs:

McCain: He hikes whenever he can find the time and walked the Grand Canyon rim to rim in August 2006. He is limited by his post-traumatic (brought on by war injuries) degenerative arthritis affecting especially his

hands and shoulders.

Obama: He plays pickup basketball, runs three miles, and exercises at hotel gyms with lightweights and treadmills daily.

### **Their Cigarette Smoking History:**

McCain: He smoked two packs of cigarettes a day for 25 years before quitting in 1980.

Obama: He has quit smoking on several occasions and currently uses Nicorette gum with success. He promises his wife, Michelle, he will give up smoking.

**My Comments:** Obama's personal diet and exercise regime, and his personal appearance of robust health provide a positive image for a president. Based on these observations I believe he is much more likely to make decisions and take actions that will result in better health and healthcare for the average American than is McCain.

## **Mortality Based on Age Alone**

McCain: 72. Date of Birth: August 29, 1936

Obama: 47. Date of Birth: August 4, 1961

**My Comments:** Based solely on their age, and no other health issues, McCain's life expectancy is 12 years and Obama's is 31 years.<sup>1</sup> Over the next 4 years a man of 72 years has a probability of dying of 16% and over 8 years, 38%. At age 47 a man has a 2% probability of dying of within 4 years, and 5% within 8 years.

During the "golden" years a person also has a significant risk of becoming disabled from a variety of conditions, including stroke, dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, heart attack, cancer, and arthritis. After age 70, the risks of all these disabilities increase rapidly with each passing month and are related to the quality of a person's diet and lifestyle.

## **Relevant Past and Present Medical History**

McCain: He allowed a select group of 20 reporters to view for only 3 hours his 1,173 pages of medical records on May 23, 2008, and these records were in addition to 1,500 pages distributed the last time he ran for the Republican candidate for president in 2000.

Obama: A one page medical letter on Obama's most recent medical checkup, done on Jan. 15, 2007, gave him a report of "completely normal."

### **Medications Taken by the Candidates**

McCain:

**Simvastatin (Zocor)**—a statin for lowering cholesterol.

**Hydrochlorothiazide**—a diuretic commonly prescribed for hypertension. Also rarely prescribed for kidney stone prevention; he has small stones in his right kidney.

**Amiloride**—a potassium-sparing diuretic used to treat hypertension.

**Aspirin**—commonly prescribed for prevention of heart attacks and other blood clots.

**Zyrtec**—an anti-histamine, used as necessary for nasal allergies.

**Ambien CR**—a sleeping pill, used as necessary for sleep induction.

**A multiple vitamin tablet**

Obama:

**Nicorette gum**—for tobacco addiction.

**My Comments:** Future history almost always follows past history when it comes to health. The exception is seen when people make serious changes in their diet and lifestyle; not by taking more medications. McCain appears to be unaware of the importance of a healthy diet.

### Candidates' Risk Factors:

McCain:

Weight: 163 to 168 pounds

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches

Cholesterol: 226 mg/dL (before medication)

Cholesterol: 192 (on simvastatin\*)

HDL cholesterol: 35 mg/dL (before medication)

Triglycerides: 260 mg/dL (before medication)

Triglycerides: 135 mg/dL (on simvastatin)

Blood pressure: 134/84 mmHg (on two anti-hypertension medications)

Blood Sugar: 111 mg/dL (slightly elevated above ideal)

Obama:

Weight: trim (no excess fat)

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch

Cholesterol: 173 mg/dL (no medication)

HDL cholesterol: 68 mg/dL (no medication)

Triglycerides: 44 mg/dL (no medication)

Blood pressure: 90/60 mmHg (no medication)

\* For people without a solid previous history of previous heart disease or stroke, therapy with statins has been shown to cause little or no reduction in their risk of future cardiovascular disease.<sup>3</sup>

## The Candidates' Heart Disease Risk

McCain: Framingham CHD Score = 27%

Obama: Framingham CHD Score = 3% as a smoker and 1% as a non-smoker.

The Framingham Heart Disease Risk Calculator combines several risk factors in order to give a score, as a percentage, that represents the probability of having a coronary heart disease (CHD) event within 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

**My Comments:** The Framingham Heart Disease Risk Calculator gives McCain a 27% chance of having a coronary heart disease (CHD) event, such as a heart attack, heart surgery, and/or death within 10 years.<sup>2</sup> His slightly elevated blood sugar and moderately elevated body weight push this risk even higher. A heart attack or surgery (angioplasty or bypass) would at a minimum put the vice president in charge for weeks to months during his recovery.

I strongly encourage McCain to change to the McDougall diet, since his excess weight, kidney stones, and elevated cholesterol, triglycerides, sugar, and blood pressure are due to his unhealthy eating. My recommendations to Obama: quit smoking by the only method that works, which is to refuse the next cigarette. He should also learn that fish is not health food, at least for the sake of our dying oceans.

## The Significance of McCain's Melanomas

Melanoma is a serious, and often fatal, form of skin cancer. His first bout with this disease came in 1996 after the biopsy of a lesion on his left temple, which showed atypical junctional melanotic proliferation. In 2000 a lesion in the same area was diagnosed as invasive melanoma (Stage IIA melanoma). Actually, at this time there were two areas of melanoma, believed to have arisen separately, found. One reached to a depth of 1.23 mm and the other had a thickness of 2.2 mm. These two cancers are believed to have formed from the spread of the 1996 lesion by way of the veins located in McCain's left temple area; a process known as "satellite metastasis".<sup>4</sup>

The finding of "negative" lymph nodes during McCain's surgery of 2000 suggests the disease was in early stages, 8 years ago. Spread of cancer to the lymph nodes is an independent process that simply indicates that the disease is in the later stages of development. Invasive melanoma spreads very early by way of the veins, not by the lymph nodes, to the rest of the body. It is important to understand that the finding of negative lymph nodes does not mean that the cancer has not spread.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the presence of the two satellite metastases treated in 2000 confirms that spread had already occurred through his veins more than 12 years ago, and is evidence that melanoma cancer cells are almost certainly present in other parts of the Senator's body today.

A roughly circular mass of skin and flesh, 6 centimeters in diameter, was removed from the left side of the McCain's face, along with the underlying parotid salivary gland. This aggressive operation seems to have controlled the "local disease."

A recent study of a large numbers of patients (17,600) with melanoma has validated the American Joint Committee on Cancer melanoma staging system.<sup>6</sup> This staging system predicts a 64% chance of a patient with stage IIA melanoma surviving for 10 years.<sup>7</sup> For someone in McCain's age group the prognosis drops to 56%.<sup>6</sup> McCain is already 8 years into these 10-year figures, which does not mean that he has beaten the odds.<sup>5</sup> Rather, because this is an on-growing systemic disease, unaffected by the extent of local facial surgery performed on the Senator in 2000, risk of death from his original melanoma will continue every year, long past the 10-year benchmarks provided above.<sup>6,7</sup>

McCain has had 3 other superficial melanomas—on his left shoulder, left arm, and left nasal sidewall. His approach to these potentially deadly skin cancers has been avoidance of sunlight exposure. This effort will be of little avail because melanomas are not due to photo-damage.<sup>8-10</sup> Rather, this serious cancer, like so many others, is due, at least in part, to his unhealthy diet.<sup>11-13</sup> This same junk-food diet promotes the growth of cancer cells already present in his body and will likely shorten the Senator's life. Here is one more reason I would strongly encourage McCain to change to the McDougall diet.

If during his presidency melanoma were to be found to have spread to his liver, brain, lungs, and/or bones, then chemotherapy treatments would undoubtedly be recommended. However, these toxic chemicals would cause him to become disabled, unable to perform his duties, for the few short months he would survive.<sup>14</sup>

## You Must Be Kidding Yourself If You Are in Doubt

While it is impossible to predict with certainty any person's future health, time of death, or degree of disability, the evidence at hand clearly says John McCain is in relatively poor health and Barack Obama is in excellent health. All politics aside, no one could conclude otherwise. To McCain's credit he appears to be holding up well during this grueling campaign, but his current appearances do not negate the medical facts.

Additionally, although it is impossible to accurately merge all the figures that predict mortality—38% (actuarial figures), 27% (cardiac risk), and 44% (melanoma mortality)—it would not be unreasonable to guess that McCain's chances of dying within the two terms of Presidential office far exceed a coin toss. Add to this the risk of him becoming disabled to the point of non-performance, then who among well-informed voters would bet their stock portfolio or their subprime-mortgaged home that, if elected,

McCain will still be our President come 2017? Would you, or the company you work for, hire an employee with McCain's medical problems? How about someone with Obama's health history? Of course, there are many other important issues that will determine the vote you will cast come November 4, 2008, but the health of our candidates is of paramount importance and should be weighed appropriately.

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## Report from the September 5 to 7, 2008 Advanced Study Weekend

Over 100 people attended this biannual McDougall event in Santa Rosa, California. As always the enthusiasm, education, food, and friendship were over the top—far greater than anyone expected.

Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr., MD gave two presentations on how to prevent and reverse heart disease by diet alone. He talked of his many struggles getting his colleagues at Cleveland Clinic to listen to his common sense advice. He emphasized the importance of no fat, including no nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and soy products, for people wanting to reverse serious heart trouble.

Ann Crile Esselstyn surprised most attendees with her enthusiastic talk and demonstration. She explained how to pick and choose low-fat canned and packaged products. Her collard wraps were to die for.

Francine Kaufman, M.D. came across as a world leader in diabetes research and education. She showed video clips from her *Discovery Network* TV documentary on diabetes worldwide. Her second presentation focused on

efforts she has personally made to help professionals and lay people understand the role of diet and diabetes, and practical programs she has developed for improving people's lives.



Lisa Bero, PhD revealed the domineering role the drug companies have played in making doctors drug pushers. We learned the tricks of the trade used to fool the customers, the doctors and patients alike.

Doug Lisle, PhD, Jeff Novick, RD, and John McDougall, MD provided their usual high quality entertaining information for the attendees.

Don't miss our next advanced study weekend to be held February 20 to 22, 2009 in Santa Rosa, CA. Guest speakers so far will be Colin Campbell PhD, author of *the China Study* and [Neil Nedley, MD](#), Director of Depression Recovery Programs.

If you are interested in learning the McDougall Program from the McDougall staff then attend our next 5-day Program, November 12 to 16, 2008. And remember, when you are ready to get serious about recovering your lost health and stopping unnecessary medications, the 10-day program is the place to be. Here Dr. McDougall will personally care for you. In the meantime, if you want some high quality fun then you can join us for the February 4 to 11, 2009 Costa Rica Adventure.

View Slideshow at <http://www.drmcDougall.com/star.html>.



## Featured Recipes

### Garden Potato Medley

We grew potatoes in our garden this year and there is nothing better tasting than freshly dug potatoes. We also had a huge crop of heirloom tomatoes, and plenty of dinosaur kale (my favorite variety) so this dish is a staple during these fall months.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

4 cups chunked potatoes  
1 tablespoon vegetable broth  
1 onion, chopped  
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced  
2 ½ cups chopped fresh tomatoes  
several twists freshly ground black pepper  
4 cups packed chopped dinosaur kale  
1 15 ounce can red beans, drained and rinsed  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 teaspoon chili paste (Sambal Oelek)  
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Place the potatoes in water to cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook until fairly tender, about 6-8 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Place the vegetable broth in a large non-stick frying pan. Add the onion, garlic and jalapeno. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until vegetables are very soft, about 3-4 minutes. Add tomatoes and black pepper. Cook, uncovered over low heat, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes. Add the kale and stir gently to combine. Cover and continue to cook for about 2 minutes until kale turns bright green, then add the potatoes and beans. Cook, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes, then add the soy sauce, chili paste and cilantro. Cook an additional 5 minutes, until kale is tender.

Serve warm or cold.

Hint: Use a variety of tomatoes for an attractive, colorful dish. Use small, new potatoes cooked with the skins on for best flavor. Small red potatoes or a variety of fingerlings are delicious in this recipe. If you can't get dinosaur kale (also called Lacinato Blue), use regular kale, but remove the stems first.

### **Potato and Kale Soup**

Another delicious use for all the potatoes and kale in my garden this year!

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

2 leeks, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced  
6 1/3 cups water  
6 cups peeled and chopped Yukon Gold potatoes  
1 teaspoon dill weed  
Freshly ground white pepper to taste  
Dash sea salt  
4 cups shredded dinosaur kale  
1 cup unsweetened almond milk

Place the leeks in a large soup pot with 1/3 cup of the water. Cook, stirring occasionally, until leeks soften, about 3-4 minutes. Add the remaining water, the potatoes, dill, pepper and salt. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook for about 20 minutes until potatoes are tender. Use an immersion blender to slightly blend the soup, leaving some potato chunks OR remove half of the soup to a blender jar and process until smooth, then return to pot and mix well. Add the dinosaur kale, cook for 5 minutes, then stir in the almond milk and let rest for about 2 minutes before serving.

Hints: Be sure to clean the leeks well before slicing. I usually cut them in half lengthwise before slicing and then rinse them under running water. 6 cups of chopped potatoes is about 3 pounds of potatoes. Dinosaur kale is also called Lacinato Blue and is quite tender. If you can't find it, use regular kale in this recipe but remove the stems first. To shred the kale, roll it slightly, then cut very thin slices (chiffonade).

### **Garden Vegetable Stew**

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6-8



1 onion, coarsely chopped  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 red bell pepper, coarsely chopped  
¼ cup vegetable broth  
1 28 ounce can fire-roasted chopped tomatoes  
4 small zucchini, sliced  
2 small yellow crookneck squash, sliced  
1 cup cut green beans  
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon parsley flakes  
1 teaspoon dried basil  
1 teaspoon dried oregano  
1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed in ¼ cup cold water

Place the onion, garlic and bell pepper in a large pot with the vegetable broth. Cook and stir until slightly softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes, zucchini, yellow squash, and beans. Cover and simmer over medium heat for 15 minutes. Add the corn and seasonings, except for the cornstarch mixture. Cook for another 10 minutes. Add the cornstarch mixture and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened.

Hint: If you have some fresh herbs in your garden, use those in place of the dried. Substitute ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil and ½ tablespoon chopped fresh oregano.

### **Spicy Red Hummus**

This is a delicious, but spicy, red bell pepper hummus. It has no added tahini or oil, so it is very low in fat, but the flavors just burst in your mouth. Serve as a spread in a wrap or as a dip for baked pita triangles.

Preparation Time: 10 minutes  
Chilling Time: 1 hour  
Servings: makes about 2 cups

1 15 ounce can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed  
2/3 cup roasted red bell pepper  
1/4 cup chopped onion  
1 jalapeno, seeded and minced  
2-3 cloves garlic, chopped  
3 tablespoons cilantro leaves  
1 tablespoon chipotle pepper in adobo sauce  
1 teaspoon paprika  
Several twists freshly ground black pepper  
Dash sea salt  
1 tablespoon water

Place all the ingredients except the water in a food processor and process until quite smooth. Add the water while processing and continue to process until mixture is very smooth. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate for at least one hour to blend flavors.

### **Harlequin Rice**

Preparation Time: 15 minutes  
Cooking Time: 50 minutes  
Servings: 4

1 onion, chopped  
1 red bell pepper, chopped  
1/2 cup chopped green onion  
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
2 1/4 cups vegetable broth  
1 cup uncooked brown basmati rice  
1 4 ounce can chopped green chilies  
1 4 ounce jar chopped pimientos  
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels

1 tablespoon parsley flakes  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
2 cups packed chopped spinach  
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro  
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Place ¼ cup of the vegetable broth in a large pot with the onion, bell pepper, green onion and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables soften slightly, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining broth, the rice, green chilies, pimientos, corn, parsley and cumin. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 45 minutes until rice is tender. Stir in remaining ingredients and cook for 2 minutes longer.

### **Tex-Mex Pasta**

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

12 ounces whole wheat or brown rice linguine or spaghetti  
1 15 ounce can fire-roasted chopped tomatoes  
1 15 ounce can kidney beans, drained and rinsed  
1 4 ounce can chopped green chilies  
1 tablespoon chili powder  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
¼ cup water  
¼ cup sherry  
1 large onion, sliced  
½ pound mushrooms, sliced  
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed in ¼ cup cold water

Place a large pot of water on to boil.

Combine the tomatoes, kidney beans, green chilies, chili powder, paprika, cumin and oregano in a bowl and set aside.

Place the water and sherry in a large non-stick sauté pan. Add the onion, mushrooms and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid has evaporated, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile drop the pasta into the boiling water and cook until tender.

Add the tomato mixture to the onions and mushrooms and cook until heated through, about 5 minutes. Add the cornstarch mixture, cook and stir until thickened.

Drain the pasta and place in a bowl. Pour the tomato-vegetable mixture over the pasta and toss gently to mix.