

Dr. John A. McDougall's

TO YOUR HEALTH

Americans are getting fatter— and dying from it!

What you need to do to stay thin and healthy

The results of two major studies on obesity are in. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that people suffering from obesity increased from 12 percent of our population in 1991 to 17.9 percent in 1998, an almost 50 percent increase. In fact, some states have witnessed more than a 100 percent increase in recent years.¹

The American Cancer Society followed more than one million adults over 14 years and found that being overweight increased the risk of death from almost any illness, but especially from cardiovascular disease or cancer. Dr. JoAnn Manson, Harvard University endocrinologist and preventive-health specialist, said that obesity is probably the leading preventable cause of death in the United States except for cigarette smoking.²

I find the results of these studies very disturbing, and that is why I'm committed to helping you stay trim and healthy—with a low-fat, whole-foods diet!

So what's causing Americans to gain weight?

Obesity is now an American "epidemic." It is an odd time in history, when more people are dying from *too much* food than from *too little*.

Interestingly, the CDC study found that physical activity did not change substantially between 1991 and 1998 for the people involved, but their average calorie intake *did*—by over 200 calories. Thus, all fingers point to the American diet.

But what has changed in the last decade? Two things come to mind for me.

The first is the popularity of processed foods; they are more readily available now than ever before, and the hectic pace of modern life causes many people to resort to them. In fact, the "Third Report on Nutritional

Monitoring in the U.S." concluded that between 1980 and 1992 the amount of money spent per person in urban households doubled for frozen, prepared foods; spending on potato chips and other snack foods increased 60 percent; and spending on carbonated drinks rose 21 percent.

These convenience foods are recipes for obesity, usually containing large amounts of fat, sugar, and salt and insufficient amounts of fiber. While "convenience foods" save time in the kitchen, they may wind up stealing years from your life. Double this disaster with the efficiency of fast food restaurants to deliver all these fattening foods.

Second, fad diets have enjoyed renewed popularity. Proof that there were benefits to a low-fat diet spurred food manufacturers to produce a variety of processed, "fat-free" foods, which Americans gobbled up under the false impression that they were healthy.

Unfortunately, these processed diet foods often contain other fat-producing ingredients, such as high quantities of sugar, vegetable oils, partially hydrogenated oils, and refined flour.

The low-fat diet I have always recommended is full of whole, *unprocessed* foods—the foods in the outer aisles of the supermarket!

In addition, many of today's fad diets require calorie restriction and exotic, hard-to-prepare menus, making them nearly impossible to follow on a long-term basis. Thus, people end up going off of them and gaining more weight than they originally lost in the first place. They then try another fad diet, and the same thing happens, leading to a "yo-yo syndrome" of lost and gained pounds, as well as feelings of failure.

One of the most popular versions of the fad diet today is the high-protein diet. People who have failed to lose weight eating all the processed low-fat foods

¹JAMA, vol. 282, no. 16, pp. 1519-1522, 1999

²New England Journal of Medicine, vol. 341, no. 15, pp. 1097-1141, 1999

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To Your Health**This Month...**

Beware of the "make yourself sick" diets	3
Our biologic "sweet tooth"	4
Recipe: Winter Warmers: Soup and Stew	5
The Doctor is in... Coffee can kill	6
Keeping up with Dr. McDougall	7
News Briefs: Lower stroke risk, Eliminate back pain	8

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Our Mission: For over 27 years, Dr. John McDougall has been fighting to bring nutrition to the forefront of mainstream medicine. Frustrated by the establishment's resistance to logic and years of evidence from his clinic, he set out to educate health conscious people about the medicinal qualities of food for the treatment and prevention of many of today's most threatening diseases. He is dedicated to teaching you how to transform your life and to achieve optimum health and appearance using the life-giving foods that were designed for your body. In addition, each month he will bring you news of his latest healing and weight-loss discoveries.

that have flooded the market are flocking to these diets, to the detriment of their health.

Read on to find out why these diets are so dangerous and how to stay thin the healthy way—by eating natural, unprocessed low-fat foods!

High-protein diets: Trading your health for temporary weight loss

I'm sure you all know somebody on a high-protein diet who's lost 20 pounds in 30 days eating all the bacon, butter, and bleu cheese dressing she wants.

Yes, these diets are grabbing the attention of millions of people. And the reason they're so popular is that you *can* temporarily lose large amounts of weight eating the high-fat foods Americans have learned to enjoy.

But there's a hitch—something the authors of these diets won't tell you about: You're risking your health.

High-protein diets are wrong—by design

Our Creator designed us to run on carbohydrates. Glucose, one of the simplest, most basic carbohydrates, is our primary fuel. It is more easily converted into energy than fat or protein, and, therefore, our bodies will always burn it first. In addition, it is the cleanest-burning fuel of the body, creating fewer byproducts than other nutrients. By our very design, the body needs carbohydrates to operate efficiently and provide ample energy. A testament to their importance is the fact that the brain tissues, red blood cells, and cells of the kidneys will only use glucose as fuel.

When you take the carbohydrates away, your body runs out of glucose and is forced to burn its secondary fuel—fat.

When your cells burn fat instead of glucose, byproducts known as ketones are produced. This creates a metabolic state called *ketosis*, which leads to a loss of appetite and a decrease in food intake, which results in weight loss. Ketosis also has a strong diuretic effect, resulting in significant water loss—and, again, weight loss. However, ketosis is also associated with fatigue, nausea, and low blood pressure.

Making yourself (literally) sick to lose weight

Ketosis occurs naturally when people are starving or seriously ill. During starvation, this metabolic state is a kindness from nature allowing the victim to suffer less from hunger pangs. During illness, the suppression of the appetite frees the person to rest and recuperate rather than be forced by hunger to get and prepare food. Because the most severely carbohydrate-restricted diets, called ketogenic diets, such as the Atkins diet and the Michael and Mary Eades' Protein Power diet, simulate this metabolic state seen with serious illness, I refer to them as "the make-yourself-sick diets."

Imagine staying sick forever

In order to remain in ketosis, you must severely restrict carbohydrates. More than 80 calories of carbohydrate, which means one-third of a baked potato, one-third cup of rice, or one orange, could be enough to take you out of ketosis and cause you to become hungry again. In order to maintain weight loss, most people must remain in this state of sickness on a long-term basis.

Living with ketosis gets old fast for most people (which you'll find completely understandable when you consider that it's going against what our Creator intended we do in the first place—burn carbohydrates). They eventually go back to their old way of eating to feel better and to enjoy their diet more—only to regain their lost weight and then some.

The fundamental truth is that your body just wasn't designed to sustain this state of sickness for long—over time, it has detrimental effects.

You could be flirting with heart disease and cancer

Low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets contain significant amounts of the very foods that the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association tell us contribute to our most common diseases. Yet proponents of the high-protein

diets claim that they prevent those diseases. They claim they lower levels of insulin, high levels of which are associated with atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The diet may also reduce blood-cholesterol levels, blood-sugar levels, and triglycerides, because dieters eat much less as a result of the appetite suppression caused by ketosis. (Other high-protein diets—such as the Carbohydrate Addicts and the Zone diets—also may reduce these risk factors by restricting food intake.)

However, the fact that these diets lower a few individual risk factors does not mean they are healthy. Cancer chemotherapy will also lower your cholesterol level and triglycerides by causing a loss of appetite that results in less food consumption.¹ Yet no one would promote chemotherapy as a healthy weight-loss approach.

The truth is we know very little

about the effects of these diets on risk factors for heart and other diseases, because the authors, to my knowledge, don't study their results and publish them in scientific journals for others to evaluate. Nor—with one exception—has anyone one else taken an interest in doing so.

The exception to this is a 1980 study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* that examined the effects of the diet described in *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution* on 24 subjects over a 12-week period.² Those participating in this study, both men and women, lost an average of about 15 pounds in eight weeks. However, their LDL "bad" cholesterol and free fatty acids increased significantly. (High levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with more

Continued on page 4

¹*Biochem Int*, vol. 24, p. 1015, 1991

²*JADA*, vol. 77, p. 264, 1980

Don't believe the "science" behind these diets

When we eat (or drink), our blood-sugar levels rise, causing the pancreas to produce a hormone called insulin. Insulin is the major regulator of fuel storage and release. It stimulates entry of glucose into the cells and the storage of fat in the fatty tissues and glycogen (from excess glucose) in the muscles and liver.

Authors of high-protein, high-fat, low-carbohydrate diets claim people are overweight because their bodies make too much insulin and have become resistant to its effects (a condition called *hyperinsulinemia*). They believe that carbohydrate consumption causes hyperinsulinemia; thus, their solution is to limit or eliminate high-carbohydrate starches, such as potatoes, whole-grain breads, and rice.

Advocates of high-protein diets argue that only carbohydrates raise insulin levels. According to them, when we consume proteins and fats, our blood-sugar levels remain low and, therefore, little insulin is produced to stuff the fats we eat into our tissues. However, this is proven to be untrue.

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (vol. 66, p. 1264, 1997) by the department of biochemistry at the University of Sydney, Australia, found that beef raised insulin levels more than white pasta and that fish raised them more than whole-grain bread. When compared with rises in glucose levels, beef raised insulin levels 27 times higher than brown rice did!

Another important study showed that a high-complex-carbohydrate diet *lowered* insulin levels. In 1992, James Barnard, from the department of medicine at UCLA, published a study on the effects of such a diet, along with exercise, on hyperinsulinemia.¹ After three weeks, adult-type diabetics and people identified with insulin resistance experienced a 30 percent reduction in insulin levels. They also showed a significant reduction in triglycerides (26 percent), cholesterol (22 percent), and weight (body mass index 4 percent).

Furthermore, the state of insulin resistance that the authors of these diets claim causes obesity is actually *caused by obesity*.² The fatter you become, the more insulin resistant you will become—for one important reason: Insulin resistance is an adaptation that helps people avoid becoming even fatter—by reducing the effectiveness of insulin so it becomes less efficient at fat storage. It's a protective mechanism!

¹*Am J Cardiol*, vol. 69, p. 440, 1992

²*Cent Eur J Public Health*, vol. 7, p. 122, 1999

Protein diets

Continued from page 3

coronary artery disease, and high levels of free fatty acids are believed to cause potentially dangerous irregular heartbeats.³) In addition, their HDL "good" cholesterol was significantly reduced, suggesting an increased risk of heart attacks.

Protein washes your bones into the toilet

Osteoporosis and kidney stones are also caused primarily by a diet rich in animal foods. Meats, seafood, fish, eggs, and cheese provide an abundance of acid that must be neutralized in order for the body to maintain its proper pH balance. The body uses its bones as a buffering system. This causes bone loss that eventually leads to osteoporosis.⁴ The high-protein diet also alters the kidneys' physiology, resulting in the loss of this bone material into the urinary system. During its passage through the ureters, calcium can solidify into kidney stones.⁵

Besides causing these long-term health problems, high-protein diets also cause immediate disorders, such as constipation, reduced mental function, bad breath, and dehydration.

Constipation will be a daily part of your life

If you do choose to try a high-protein diet, make sure you have plenty of laxatives on hand. High-protein diets cause constipation, because they are composed chiefly of foods (meat, fish, and cheese) that are completely free of dietary fiber, which is necessary for proper bowel function. Low-fiber diets are also believed to cause varicose veins, hemorrhoids, and a hiatal hernia.

Fiber, found only in plant foods (food high in carbohydrates), has many health-promoting qualities. It binds with carcinogens, fats, and cholesterol and eliminates them in the feces. By eliminating carcinogens, it reduces your risk of developing cancer, and by eliminating fat and cholesterol, it reduces your risk of heart disease, atherosclerosis, and obesity. Fiber also improves the

efficiency of insulin, so that we need less of it to maintain appropriate blood-sugar levels.

Sharp as a tack? Not anymore.

Another immediate effect you may notice on a high-protein diet is reduced mental capacity. A recent study shows that mental functioning is impaired by ketosis. The study tested the ability of a group of people on a ketogenic diet to perform on a neuropsychological test that requires high levels of mental processing and flexibility. The researchers concluded that the high-protein diet impaired their mental function.⁶

Val Johnson of Lakeland, Florida said, "I stayed on the diet a week and a half, and it clouded my thinking. I made some big mistakes on the job, one of which cost me a considerable amount of money."

They drain your body of its most important element

Carbohydrate-deficient diets cause dehydration. In fact, this is the main reason that the initial weight loss for people on these diets is so rapid. When you consume insufficient amounts of carbohydrates, your body burns the carbohydrates (glycogen) you have stored in the liver and muscles. The average body stores 300 grams of glycogen, with 2.7 grams of water stored with each gram of glycogen. Thus, depletion of your body's glycogen would result in an almost overnight weight loss of 8,110 grams (over 3 pounds) of water and glycogen. Once your body has depleted its glycogen stores, it starts burning its stored fat, creating ketones that have a strong diuretic effect on your kidneys, resulting in additional water loss.

Keith Ayoob, professor of nutri-

Continued on page 6

Our biologic "sweet tooth"—why a diet of meat provides little satisfaction

We are designed not only to efficiently burn carbohydrates but also to enjoy them. Our Creator even designed our tongues and taste buds to selectively seek them out. At the tip of your tongue are the "sweet" taste buds, indicating that the sweet taste (found in carbohydrates) is the first one you want to experience. In fact, anthropologists tell us that a "biologic sweet tooth" enabled early humans to know if a food was nutritious or poisonous. If a food didn't taste sweet at the tip of the tongue, they didn't eat it, and the body was protected.

Most people don't eat butter, mayonnaise, or sour cream unless they have a carbohydrate to go with it. In fact, unless you accompany your beef, bacon, and butter with carbohydrates, you will quickly lose your appetite for such foods. Incidentally, if you manage to stay on a high-fat, high-protein diet, you will lose some weight, but most people can't keep this type of eating up for long.

Doris Bosnyack of San Bernardino, California, put it this way, "I stayed on it about three weeks. After a while, I couldn't eat; the taste of the food was terrible. I didn't enjoy it—just meat, meat, meat. I got constipated and lethargic. I looked terrible. I just felt sick."

³Lancet, vol. 343, p. 155, 1994

⁴J Nutri, vol. 128, p. 1051, 1998

⁵J Pediatr, vol. 117, p. 743, 1990

⁶Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord, vol. 19, p. 811, 1995

Winter warmers: Soups and stews

Through the ages, no other meal has been as consistently popular as a simmering supper of soup or stew. Winter, with its cooler (or downright cold) weather, makes soups an especially popular meal choice. There are many benefits to serving soup as a meal. Because they're one-pot meals, they'll save you cleaning time, they can be re-heated for several days, and, if they're like the recipes below that don't contain animal ingredients, such as cream, milk, butter, or meat, they'll stay fresh for over a week in the refrigerator.

Soup allows you to get creative and use up things from around your kitchen. The proportions of the ingredients (especially if you're making a large pot of stew) don't have to be exact. I'll often make up the soup as I go, depending upon what I have available in my garden, pantry, or refrigerator.

Winter Vegetable Stew

This is a delicious stew, made with winter squash, beans and hearty greens. You can make substitutions for some of the main ingredients, using different seasonal root vegetables or squashes, or other kinds of legumes and veggies.

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 55 minutes

Servings: 8

- 1 1/2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- 1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 4 cups peeled and chopped butternut squash
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground oregano
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 15-ounce can seasoned red beans, undrained
- 1 1/2 cups frozen corn
- 1 1/2 cups chopped Swiss chard

Place 1/2 cup of the broth and the soy sauce in a large soup pot. Add onion, bell pepper and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, squash and seasonings, plus the remaining vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and cook for 40 minutes. Add beans, corn and chard, and cook an additional 10 minutes.

Italian Vegetable Soup

With this classic soup, you can again feel free to substitute other ingredients. For example, use red kid-

FROM *Mary's* *Kitchen*

By Mary McDougall



ney or garbanzo beans in place of white cannellini beans. Use another kind of cabbage, or a dark leafy green such as kale. If you choose a green that requires less cooking time, add the greens along with the zucchini, instead of with the potatoes and carrots, to avoid wilting. You can also use a small pasta, such as orzo, instead of the wheat berries. The pasta should be added with the zucchini.

Soak: Overnight

Preparation Time: 40 minutes

Cooking Time: 2 1/2 hours

Servings: 10-12

- 1 cup dried cannellini beans
- 1 cup dried wheat berries
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 heaping tablespoon chopped basil
- 1 14.5-ounce can chopped tomatoes
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 2 potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 carrots, cut in half lengthwise, then sliced
- 2 cups green beans, cut in 1-inch pieces
- 4 cups coarsely chopped Savoy cabbage
- 2 zucchini, sliced in half lengthwise, then sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup soy "parmesan" cheese
- several twists freshly ground pepper

Soak beans and wheat berries overnight in separate bowls, with 6 cups of water in each bowl. Drain. Place beans in a large saucepan with 6 cups water. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook over low heat for 1 1/4 hours. Remove from heat. Do not drain.

Meanwhile, place onion in a large soup pot with 1/2 cup of the vegetable broth. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add garlic and basil and cook and stir for 1 minute. Add remaining vegetable broth, tomatoes, wheat berries and the water. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook over low heat for 1 1/2 hours. Add potatoes, carrots, green beans, cabbage and cooked beans with their liquid. Cover, return to a boil, reduce heat and cook over low heat for 30 minutes. Add zucchini and cook an additional 30 minutes. Add parsley, soy cheese and pepper. Stir. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

The Doctor is in...

Coffee can kill

Q I've followed your philosophy for years, but I can't give up my coffee. Am I risking my life?
—Paul Rossi,
Long Island, N.Y.

JM Yes, you may be risking your life, or at least the quality of it—for a whole host of reasons. First, the obvious—caffeine.

Caffeine's stimulating effects make it one of the few legal drugs enjoyed by people worldwide.

Coffee can, when first ingested, make you keener, increase your alertness, and (as a special benefit) enable you to lose weight by suppressing appetite and by increasing the metabolic rate of your body, resulting in more calories burned.

However, there's a long list of possible negative side effects associated with caffeine, including nausea, anxiety, insomnia, muscle tension, headaches, dehydration, nervous tension, and tremors. Some people also experience confusion. Caffeine has also been shown to raise blood pressure, heart rate, and frequency of arrhythmias.

Second, there are a number of side effects not associated with caffeine.

Indigestion, for example, is caused not by caffeine but by other components of the coffee bean that cause a burning feeling in the stomach.

And, of course, every serious coffee drinker knows where to find the nearest bathroom, because it causes loose stools, diarrhea, and an increased urgency to urinate.

On a more serious note, there is some evidence that coffee can increase your risk of dying of heart disease by raising your cholesterol.

And, despite what many people

think, decaffeinated coffee is not necessarily a healthier option. Studies show that it raises cholesterol just as much as, if not more than, regular coffee, possibly because of the kinds of beans used.

I know it's difficult to quit, but it's not impossible.

Withdrawal symptoms you're likely to experience include headaches, sweating, inability to concentrate, and depression that can last four to seven days.

To help ease the transition, take a pain reliever for the headache and seek out some of the transitional substitute alternatives, products like Cafix or Roma (made up of items like roasted barely, chicory, figs and dates), and found in natural-food stores. Another alternative is a caffeine-free herbal coffee called Teeccino. Some say these products taste better; you may find yourself enjoying them long after the need for a "coffee fix" is gone.

Protein diets

Continued from page 4

tion at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City, warns about the bad breath caused by the high-protein diets.⁷ This unpleasant side effect is caused by the ketones produced when your body is forced to burn fat. These ketones are partly eliminated from your body via your breath. Although halitosis isn't physically damaging to you, it could seriously damage your social or business life.

Is there anything good about these diets?

One thing I'll agree with the authors of high-protein diets about is that refined carbohydrates do raise insulin levels, and, as a result, when combined with fat, they promote obesity. These diets recommend that you avoid sugar, white flour, milk, ice cream, cakes, pies,

soft drinks, and low-fat-diet products that contain large amounts of highly refined carbohydrates. I heartily agree!

Also, to their credit, many recommend a high intake of green and yellow vegetables, such as asparagus, cauliflower, and onions. But they fail the dieter by restricting healthy complex carbohydrates like rice, corn, beans, and potatoes and by recommending butter, eggs, meat and other very high-fat and/or high-protein foods.

The truth: Complex carbohydrates are the secret to health and weight loss

Just look at the thin people around the world: The Japanese, for example, consume mainly rice and vegetables and obesity among them is almost unheard of. They also have very low rates of heart disease and of breast, colon, and prostate cancer and hold the

world's record for longevity. (However, now that McDonalds' golden arches have begun to pop up all over Japan, these health statistics may soon be history!) Also, in the United States, many Seventh-day Adventists are strict vegetarians and, as a result, have lower incidences of obesity, heart disease, and colon cancer than the general population.⁸

A diet based on complex carbohydrates with the addition of fruits and vegetables will cause effortless, permanent weight loss without hunger, while promoting good health. You can eat delicious dishes like minestrone soup, chili, and bean burritos. You won't ever have to make yourself sick again with fried cheese cubes wrapped in bacon. And it's a program you can stick to—for the rest of your new, healthy, and long vital life!

⁷Time, vol. 154, no. 18, 1999

⁸Am J Clin Nutr, vol. 48, p. 833, 1988; Cancer Res, vol. 35, p. 3513, 1975

Keeping up with Dr. McDougall

Recommended Books:

The New McDougall Cookbook (\$13.95)
• *McDougall's Medicine—A Challenging Second Opinion* (\$12.95) • *The McDougall Plan* (\$12.95) • *The McDougall Health-Supporting Cookbooks—Volumes I & II* (\$9.95 ea.)
• *The McDougall Audio Tapes* (set of 6 tapes) (\$39.95) • *Video: 5 Dietary Myths* (60 min.) (\$14.95) • *Video: McDougall TV Segments* (120 min.) (\$14.95)

Books found in Bookstores or order at: (707)576-1654; fax: (707)576-3313; (800)570-1654; On the web:

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McDougall Programs at St. Helena Hospital

If you are serious about regaining lost health and appearance this is the place to spend your next vacation. For most people this is a vacation from medication, feeling poorly, and being out of control of their health and future. In 12 days the average weight loss for overweight people is 5 pounds (eating all they want of delicious foods), cholesterol levels drop 29 points, blood pressures fall and most people stop their blood pressure and diabetic pills. Begin the new millennium on a road to good health and regain the youthful appearance you deserve. Join us for one of the best times of your life on Dec. 5, 1999, Jan. 9, Feb. 6, or Mar. 5, 2000 at my 12-day live-in clinic in Napa Valley, California. I (John McDougall, MD) personally care for all the participants. Reservations and information: (800) 358-9195; (707)963-6207.

McDougall, M.D. on TV

Nationally Syndicated TV Show found on 150 independent stations, Primestar Satellite 8 AM EST Saturday, broadcast.com on Kaleidoscope, and at drmcDougall.com. Locate a local station at clicktv.com.

McDougall Adventures for 2000

What people say about McDougall Adventures:

"I've never met so many interesting people in one place, all having the time of their lives."

—Ann Wheat, Belvedere, CA

Ann has been on the last 7 McDougall Adventures and will be on the next 2 in the year 2000.

"We want to thank you and your lovely family for all your hard work in giving us the nicest, most organized trip we ever experienced. We truly now know the meaning of adventure. We especially liked the food and that was the main reason I wanted Wesley to go on this trip."

—Jeannine Uffelman, Napa, CA

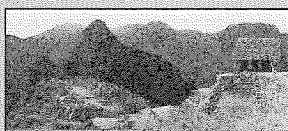
"Walter and I had a vacation of a lifetime. We couldn't have been happier with the experience. Your attention to detail and consideration for each participant made this marvelous experience possible."

—Nancy Joerg, St. Charles, IL

"Thanks for the multitude of wonderful adventures in Costa Rica; our children are very excited about the nutritional information and fun you both provided."

—Janet Lamb, San Carlos, CA

12 Days to Peru and Machu Picchu March 20-31, 2000



\$2675* (Based on double occupancy, includes air and ground transportation within Peru). All inclusive (except alcoholic beverages and air transportation to Lima.) Special airfares to Lima available. Visit Lima, Cuzco, Pisac Market, Machu Picchu (with a night spent at the hotel at the ruins), Puno, Lake Titicaca and much more. Deposit is \$600 per person (fully refundable until December 1, 1999, balance due January 7, 2000).

8 Days in Costa Rica July 31-August 7, 2000

\$1450 and up* All inclusive (except airfare, based on double occupancy). We're leaving July 31 for El Ocotal, a paradise on the northwest coast of Costa Rica. Adventures are planned for Coribici river rafting (Class 1 to 2), Los Inocentes Ranch (Horseback

riding if you choose), Tamarindo Estuary (small boats into the mangroves), the Tree Top (easy trip)/Canyon Tour (real scary), national parks and local attractions. Entertainment most nights. Scuba and snorkeling included. Singles are \$1850. Deposit is \$400 per person (fully refundable until March 15, 2000, balance due May 1, 2000).

We have rented the entire hotel in Costa Rica so the food will be excellent, low-fat, no-cholesterol, prepared McDougall-style. Peru will be a little more of a challenge. In addition, John and Mary McDougall will be providing education on the McDougall Program. Travel insurance available and recommended. Special airfares available (Example, from San Francisco, \$750 to Peru and \$650 to Costa Rica). For more information or reservations for any of these McDougall Adventures call (800)570-1654.

*All rates are per person. Itinerary and prices subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. CST #2049430-50



For back-pain relief, exercise may be superior to standard treatments

According to a study reported in the July 1999 issue of *The British Medical Journal*,¹ a good exercise class may be better at curing an ailing back than the standard treatments offered by general practitioners, such as NSAIDs, muscle relaxants, and bed rest. The study analyzed 187 patients (age 18 to 60 years) who had experienced chronic back pain. Half the patients were treated in the standard way while half participated in a class that included strengthening exercises for all main muscle groups, stretching, and relaxation. The patients were then measured both six months and one year later.

The study concluded that the exercise class was more effective than traditional general-practitioner management for lower back pain, as patients in the exercise group needed fewer health-care services and took fewer days off work. They also reported much less pain six months and one year after their initial request for help, compared with the group receiving the standard treatments.

It is good to see a study that proves natural treatments are more effective at treating chronic lower-back pain than the pharmaceutical solutions offered by most doctors. The standard treatments may be appropriate for acute back pain, but not for chronic pain. For this, I would recommend stretching, low-impact aerobics, and strengthening exercises supervised by a trained physical therapist. If you add a healthy diet that improves circulation and causes permanent weight loss, you have a real tool for alleviating pain.

Vegetables can lower your risk of a stroke

Two large studies evaluating whether diet affects a person's likelihood of suffering a stroke have reached their conclusions.² The Nurses' Health Study, begun in 1976, and the Health Professionals' Study, begun in 1986, both found that those who consume the most fruits and vegetables have the lowest risk of stroke. Consumption of cruciferous vegetables (such as broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts), leafy green vegetables, and citrus fruits offer the greatest protection.

Here is further support for the importance of eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Strokes are caused by long-term damage to the arteries that supply the brain. This damage, known as atherosclerosis, is a result of the unhealthy American diet, loaded with fat and cholesterol and lacking fiber, antioxidants, and other plant-derived nutrients. I couldn't agree more with these studies' conclusions; if you want to avoid a stroke, eat your vegetables!

¹BMJ, vol. 319, p. 297, 1999

²JAMA, vol. 282, p. 1233, 1999

Note from the Publisher

Please be advised that the January issue of *To Your Health* will not be mailed until the first week of January 2000.

Therefore, you may experience a minor delay in receiving your issue. This adjustment in mail dates is to allow for any service interruptions that may be experienced by the postal system due to the so-called "Millennium Bug." We'll mail the issue immediately once we're certain all problems have been corrected. We're sorry for any inconvenience this may cause. Thank you and happy holidays.

Issue wrap up

Popular diets go in cycles. In the 1980s, people finally started to lean toward high-carbohydrate diets. Unfortunately, industry decided to cash in and taught Americans a diet of low-fat, highly-refined cookies, snacks, and cakes instead. Only a few learned the truth about the value of a diet based on unrefined starches with fruits and vegetables. Those who didn't are those in the 1990s seeking salvation with the low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets. All will fail for the reasons you learned in this issue. While people embrace every new weight-loss gimmick, scientists continue to unravel the truth. Consistently, the research has shown humans live best on a whole-foods, plant-based diet. The sooner people see through the marketing hype and learn the truth, the less they suffer. Until this deadly cycle comes to an end, I will continue to keep you abreast of this science so you and your family can enjoy the absolute best of health.

John A. McDougall, M.D.

P.S. Next month, you'll read what changes I would make to health care if I were the Surgeon General. Also upcoming, find out the hazards of iron, the benefits of low-dose aspirin, and Mary's most delicious casserole recipes.

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Dr. McDougall is the author of several nationally best-selling books, including *The McDougall Plan*, *McDougall's Medicine: A Challenging Second Opinion*, *The McDougall Program: 12 Days to Dynamic Health* and *The McDougall Program for Maximum Weight Loss*.

Dr. McDougall's face will be familiar to many from his television appearances on CNN, *The Phil Donahue Show*, and other programs. He also hosts his own nationally syndicated television program *McDougall, M.D.* shown throughout the country.