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Dr. John A. McDougall's

TO YOUR HEALTH

New "cholesterol-lowering" margarines are empty on promises, but full of fat and calories

No doubt you've heard about the new cholesterol-lowering margarines—the two most popular being Benecol and Take Control.¹ The media onslaught offers promises of lower cholesterol levels through the daily intake of these margarine-like products. You don't have to be a doctor to wonder at that reasoning—and wonder you should. When something seems too good to be true, it usually is, and that is certainly the case with these "cholesterol-lowering" products.

The question isn't so much "Do they work?" as it is "How do they work?" and "Is it worth it?" Clinical studies do show that these products can lower cholesterol levels, particularly LDL, or "bad" cholesterol. Marketing materials for Benecol say that their products can lower LDL cholesterol levels up to 14 percent. Take Control claims a slightly more modest 10 percent reduction in LDL. The problem is, however, that the reduction is only temporary and comes at a price.

Plant sterols work to block cholesterol absorption—but are they safe?

Products like Benecol and Take Control contain a form of plant sterol—a natural extract taken from wood and vegetable oils. Sterols are molecularly similar to cholesterol and work by inhibiting the absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine.¹ Therefore, more cholesterol is excreted from the body instead of being absorbed. This process works particularly to reduce LDL cholesterol, because less cholesterol is processed by the liver (where LDL is produced).²

These plant sterols are described as "natural" extracts. But while they may occur in nature, their use as food additives is strictly man-made. These products have gained FDA approval in the United States and

have been used for many years in Finland, but some questions still remain about their long-term safety. Some studies have suggested that high concentrations of plant sterols in the blood are associated with premature coronary artery disease.³

Loaded with fat and empty calories—and profits for their manufacturers

Take a look at the nutritional information on your container of Benecol—the main ingredient is canola oil—a fat, plain and simple. It also contains two forms of soybean oils within the top five ingredients. One serving—about one half tablespoon—contains 45 calories, all of which come from fat. The Benecol Thousand Island dressing is even worse. Two tablespoons of this stuff packs 130 calories—110 of them from fat. Again, the main ingredient is soybean oil.

Take Control is no better. One serving of the spread (1 tablespoon) has 50 calories, all from fat, in addition to canola, sunflower, and soybean oils. At the recommended daily intake, this means you're going to take in about 150 calories of fat, which will likely become "the fat you wear."

If you read the fine print on these products, you'll notice that to achieve the touted LDL reduction, you'll have to eat up to three servings per day. How convenient for the manufacturers—especially considering that these products cost up to five times as much as regular margarine. What's really ironic is that the small print also tells you that these products deliver on their promises when used "as part of a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet"—when a truly healthy diet has no place for processed margarine spreads or Thousand Island dressings. And, like other cholesterol-lowering medications,

¹Am J Clin Nutr, 69:403-410, 1999

²The Medical Letter, 441:56-58, 1999

³Metabolism, 40:842, 1991

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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 by 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.

Mainstream's latest scapegoat:

Stress does not cause cancer; and with the right attitude it can actually help

Some researchers have sought to forge a link between stressful conditions and the diagnosis of cancer. The stories have been featured prominently in the media, often based on little more than anecdotal evidence. Dramatic stories of traumatic life events and deadly diseases make for good copy—but not good science.

This type of information is not only unfounded and incorrect but also damaging and irresponsible. To lay an additional burden at the feet of a cancer patient is cruel. Not only does the patient and his or her family have to deal with the diagnosis, but are also made to feel guilty that they didn't work harder to avoid or relieve this cancerous stress, and thereby avoid this horrible disease. Or, worse yet, they feel that the stress they created actually caused the cancer.

No real evidence for this pop-psychology connection

Serious medical research debunks this pop-psychology theory time and time again. In a British study, researchers found that women with malignant breast cancer were no more likely to have experienced severe life events in the previous five years than those with a benign lump.¹ In Norway, a team of scientists found that the loss of a husband through death or divorce had no association with breast-cancer risk.² And research involving former World War II and Korean prisoners of war found no increased mortality from cancer—and no one can dispute that these people had experienced stressful life events.³

Stress is natural—and often positive

Stress is a natural part of life. It is in many ways a positive force, a motivator. Under stress, people have been known to accomplish amazing things. And most often, stress is entirely out of our control. Telling a patient to, "avoid stress" is akin to telling him to stop breathing.

That's why the studies supporting the cancer-stress link are so problematic. Asking a cancer patient if he has experienced stress is a ridiculous question, particularly in light of the fact that the vast majority of participants in these studies are in their 50s or older. It is hard to imagine that they have not experienced a stressful life event. The loss of a spouse, illness, marital discourse, financial troubles—these are all too often part of life, especially among the elderly population. To point to that reality and link it to cancer is malicious at worst—and irresponsible at best.

The unpopular truth about cancer: Diet and lifestyle are the culprits

Anyone who is familiar with my work knows my views on cancer. Cancer is caused by a host of toxic substances that most people willingly let into their bodies each day—through the food they eat and their lifestyle choices. Stress is just the latest scapegoat in a long line of items the medical establishment has offered up to a public that doesn't want to hear

¹BMJ, 319:1027-1030, 1999

²Eur J Cancer, 30A: 473-477, 1994

³Am J Epidemiol, 111:194-211, 1980

the truth—that their diet and lifestyle are killing them.

A positive attitude can make a difference

I do believe that there is a psychological element to sickness and health, but I would characterize it more in terms of attitude. A patient with a positive attitude, a willingness to listen and learn and be an advocate for his own health, has a much better chance at recovery. Research supports this view as well. When breast-cancer patients' states of mind were assessed using several commonly used scales, those reporting feelings of helplessness and hopelessness had a significantly higher incidence of death at the five-year follow-up.⁴ In another study, researchers found that cancer patients who exhibited a "fighting spirit" were significantly more likely to be alive and relapse-free even 10 years after diagnosis.⁵

Don't give up—It's never too late to make healthy changes

Stress does not cause cancer, but having cancer is certainly stressful. If you or someone in your family is battling this horrible disease, don't waste precious energy and time feeling guilty about what may have caused it. Instead, channel that energy into finding ways to fight the disease and maximize your enjoyment of life.

Research and common sense will tell you that a positive attitude and a "fighting spirit" will help you win the war against cancer. I'm telling you that it's never too late to add another weapon to the arsenal. Making healthy changes in diet and life style, even after a cancer diagnosis, can do nothing but help. A health-supporting diet can slow the spread of cancer in the body and increase the chances of beating the disease.

New "cholesterol-lowering" margarines

Continued from page 1

these products must be taken indefinitely. Once you stop, your cholesterol levels will return to where they were before.

It's your health that's at risk in the long run

And that's really what's wrong with this picture. The manufacturers are counting on the fact that many people will see these products as magic wands, as easy and painless ways to better health. Tragically, although they'll see their cholesterol levels artificially lowered, they'll be consuming more fat and empty calories.

These "cholesterol-lowering" products are just another shell game, designed to placate people while making food manufacturers a whole lot of money. Believe me, there are no altruistic motives at work here. If these companies truly wanted you to lower your cholesterol and lead a healthier life, they'd tell you the truth—that even these so-called healthy products are still loaded with fat and calories and, in addition, are totally unnecessary, especially since

there are so many healthy, delicious substitutes available.

These "cholesterol-lowering" products are just another shell game, designed to placate people while making food manufacturers a whole lot of money.

Take control of your cholesterol intake

Certainly, an obvious step in lowering cholesterol is to stop eating foods that contain it. You'll also want to limit your simple sugars and begin a light exercise program. At my clinic, patients with high cholesterol levels have lowered those levels by an average of 65 points in just 11 days. So, instead of filling the manufacturers pockets, keep your money and take control of your health the way God intended.

Better butter alternatives—tastier too!

Some delicious alternatives to butter and margarine that will be better for your heart and won't pack on the pounds are jam, apple butter, applesauce (great for baking), corn butter, and no-oil salad dressings. Just be creative and you'll come up with many more. Following is a recipe for one of our favorites.

Makes 1 1/2 cups

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes (for cornmeal)

1/4 cup cornmeal

1 cup water

1/4 cup additional water

1-2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 tsp. no-salt seasoning blend

Place the cornmeal in a saucepan, add the 1 cup water and cook, stirring constantly until smooth and thick. Place the cooked cornmeal and all the remaining ingredients in the blender and process until smooth. Add more water if necessary to reach desired spreading consistency.

⁴Lancet, 354:1331-1336, 1999

⁵Lancet, i:750, 1985

The power of prayer—physicians recognize positive effects of a force they cannot explain

When a husband, wife, or child becomes seriously ill, even the most errant followers will offer up a prayer. It's often seen as a desperate act; a last-ditch effort to find some comfort, some hope. But, as science itself now shows, it can do much more than that—even for the nonbelievers.

People have been praying for the sick since the beginning of time. Only in recent history, as medical science has become so "advanced," has prayer taken a back seat to science. Those who rely on prayer are now seen as antiquated, quaint, and naïve.

Prayer and faith are imprecise, in scientific terms. They aren't easily quantified or measured. And the scientific community has rarely ventured into the spiritual realm. But recently a group of doctors in Kansas City, Missouri, attempted to measure the effects of prayer on patients in a hospital coronary-care unit—with some surprising results.

Over the course of a year, nearly every patient that was admitted to the Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City was

assigned to one of two groups—a prayer group or a usual care group. Only those awaiting heart transplants and those admitted for less than one day were omitted. The assignments were completely random, based only on the last digit of the patient's hospital record number—evenings were assigned the prayer group while odds were placed into the usual care group. Patients and hospital staff were unaware of the study; only the chaplain and his secretary were party to the information.

The first names of patients in the prayer group were passed along to prayer-team leaders, who were instructed to pray for them for 28 days, asking for their "speedy" recovery with no complications.¹ The patients in the prayer group had a 10 percent reduction in adverse outcomes compared to those who weren't prayed for.

There's nothing wrong with a little faith

Highly educated people often feel the need to scoff at the supernatural. They feel that science has

an explanation for everything and that anything that can't yet be explained probably isn't true or at least requires more research. This arrogance is seen all too often in doctors, who for all their years of education can often be quite ignorant.

Over the years, I've seen the full spectrum of doctors' reactions to matters of faith. On one occasion I actually heard a woman say to her doctor, "Thank God I am still alive." And he laughed, "No lady, you better thank me!" While on the other hand, I have been moved by the sight of a physician praying at the bedside with his sick patient.

History is full of stories of miraculous cures brought on by prayer. Today, its power remains. Maybe this study shows that science is beginning to understand—or at least come to terms with—the inexplicable. But you certainly don't have to wait for your doctor to come around. A little prayer certainly can't hurt, and shouldn't be saved for that last-ditch effort.

¹*Arch Intern Med*, 159:2273-2278, 1999

More evidence that mammograms do not save lives

A new Danish study has concluded that routine mammograms do not reduce breast-cancer mortality rates. Eight published screening studies, which included a half million women from the United States, Canada, Scotland, and Sweden, were evaluated in the study. The researchers found no benefit from the "early detection" efforts of mammography.¹

This study reinforces what I have been saying all along—mammography's claim of early detection is a myth. Many other studies indicate that mammography is a flawed tool with no preventive benefits.

¹*Lancet*, 355:129-134, 2000

We welcome your input!

If you're using Dr. McDougall's program and would like to share your success stories about weight loss, heart disease, arthritis, cancer, headaches, etc., please write to us. Your story may help to inspire others and may give us new ideas for articles. Send mail to:

Dr. McDougall's To Your Health
819 N. Charles St. • Baltimore, MD 21201

Due to a high volume of reader mail, we may not be able to respond personally to each letter. However, your letter will be read and taken into consideration for future issues and special reports.

McDougall Program recipes

"Will I like the food?" This is the first question most people ask about our residential program at St. Helena Hospital and Health Center. It is the job of our head chef, Cris Hartung, to make the introduction to this healthy way of eating a pleasant experience. These three recipes will show you why people love the food from the first day they arrive. For a free sample of our staff's favorite recipes, and more information about the McDougall Program, call (800)358-9195.

SPICY PUMPKIN SOUP

Servings: 8

For this Indian soup, you can substitute pureed winter squash, yams, or sweet potatoes for the pumpkin.

- 2 1/2 cups water or vegetable stock
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 15-ounce can pumpkin (or 2 cups cooked pumpkin)
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 cups soy milk or rice milk
- fresh cilantro (optional)

Heat 1/2 cup of the water or stock in a large pot and cook the onion and garlic until the onion is soft (about 5 min.).

Add spices and salt and cook 2 min. over low heat, stirring constantly. Whisk in the remaining water or stock, the pumpkin, maple syrup and lemon juice. Simmer 15 min.

Add the soy milk or rice milk and puree the soup in a blender in two to three batches until very smooth. Be sure to start on low speed and hold the lid on tightly. Return to the pot and heat without boiling, until steamy.

Serve immediately, with a sprinkling of fresh cilantro.

POTATO ENCHILADAS

Servings: 8

Sauce:

- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 3 cups water
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with 1/2 cup water

Combine all ingredients except cornstarch in a large pot and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook 20 min. Stir in cornstarch mixture and cook over low heat, stirring often, until thickened.

Mary's Corner

Recipe OF THE MONTH

By Mary McDougall



Filling:

- 4 cups cooked, diced potatoes
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 1 cup diced zucchini
- 1/2 cup finely chopped green onion
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons chili powder

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir gently to mix.

Garbanzo cheese:

- 1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1/2 cup roasted red peppers
- 1 tablespoon tahini
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin

Process the drained garbanzo beans, red peppers, tahini, lemon juice, garlic, and cumin in a food processor until very smooth.

Cut a slit in a plastic bag of 12 corn tortillas. Warm the tortillas in a microwave until soft, about 1 min.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. To assemble enchiladas: spread 1/2 cup of the sauce over the bottom of a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Spread about 2 tablespoons of garbanzo cheese on a tortilla, then add about 1/2 cup of the vegetable mixture. Roll the tortilla around the filling. Place seam side down in the baking dish. When all the tortillas have been filled, spread the remaining sauce over them. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 min. Makes 12 enchiladas.

APPLE CRISP WITH RAISINS

Servings: 9

- 4 large green apples, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 3/4 cup Grape-Nuts cereal
- 3/4 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 2/3 cup apple juice
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch or arrowroot

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Toss the apple slices with 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and the lemon juice. Arrange in a 9 x 9-inch baking dish and sprinkle with raisins.

In a bowl, mix the Grape-Nuts, rolled oats, and cinnamon, then stir in the maple syrup. Spread evenly over apples. Mix the apple juice and cornstarch or arrowroot, then pour evenly over other ingredients. Bake for 35 to 50 min., until apples are tender when pierced with a knife.

Recreational activity reduces risk of gallstones

A study conducted by doctors at Harvard University has found that women who engage in moderate recreational activity are at significantly lower risk of developing gallstones. A group of 60,290 women between the ages of 40 and 65 were followed for 10 years. Women who exercised as little as two to three hours a week reduced their risk of gallstones by as much as 20 percent.¹

The benefits of exercise went beyond its effects on body weight, long known as a contributor to gallstones. Physical activity also had positive effects on many other factors that have been linked to the problem, including glucose tolerance, LDL and triglyceride levels, and ovarian hormones.

It's important that you don't shy away from exercise because you think it could be too strenuous or inconvenient. Walking is just as effective as more intensive workouts like running, aerobics, and swimming. Furthermore, it can be a great way to meet people. A lot of community groups and even local malls have morning-walker programs.

¹N Engl J Med, 341:777-784, 1999

Beef and dairy bias alleged on government advisory panel

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) has filed a federal lawsuit against two U.S. government agencies, alleging that the meat and dairy industries have undue influence on a powerful advisory committee—one that could play a role in what you feed yourself and your family.

This influential advisory com-

mittee happens to be responsible for revising the dietary guidelines for Americans that are the basis for all government food programs. In addition, the guidelines are disseminated to the public through various educational campaigns, including the widely used food pyramid.

The PCRM's suit against the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services alleges that at least six of the advisory committee's 11 members have ties to the meat, dairy or egg industries. It charges that the committee's composition is in direct conflict with a 1972 law designed to prevent industry influence on federal advisory committees.

I applaud the committee's efforts to hold Washington accountable for its deceit. Despite years of research and reams of evidence, our nation has chosen to largely ignore the truth—our diet—full of meat, milk, cheese, and eggs—is killing us. The government is party to this epidemic, by providing us with misleading information through its dietary guidelines and the food pyramid. Look for updates in future issues as this lawsuit makes its way through the courts.

Do vitamin E and fish oil contribute to a healthy heart?

New research supports the heart-health claims made for fish-oil supplements, while debunking the cardiovascular benefits of vitamin E. In a study conducted in Italy, doctors followed 11,324 patients who had survived heart attacks in the previous three months. The participants were divided into four groups: one receiving fish-oil supplements only (1 gram of n-3 polyunsaturated

fatty acids daily), one receiving vitamin E supplements only (300 mg daily), one receiving both fish oil and vitamin E, and one receiving a control substance. After a series of follow-up visits over the following two years, the team found that there were no significant changes in cholesterol levels for any of the groups but that there was a small decrease in the triglyceride levels of those taking the fish-oil supplements.¹

Over three to five years, the groups receiving fish oil had a 15 percent lower risk of death and nonfatal heart attack and stroke than the vitamin-E-only and control groups. Vitamin E showed no significant benefit for the participants.

While the fish-oil results are significant, I would interpret them with caution. Fish oil works by thinning the blood—a result reached much more easily by taking a small daily dose of aspirin when medically indicated. To achieve the reported benefits of fish oil, you must take just the right amount—an amount far larger than can ever be achieved through dietary intake. And fish oil is still oil, after all, and oil is fat—and that leads to obesity, which contributes to heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke.

Fish oil also can contain significant amounts of cholesterol—which is at odds with the goal of a healthy heart. The important thing to remember is that heart disease is certainly not caused by a lack of fish oil in your diet. If you are already following a healthy eating plan, you shouldn't need to supplement your diet with fish oil or vitamin E.

If you are concerned that you aren't getting enough essential fatty acids in your diet, remember that fresh ground flaxseed is an excellent vegetarian source that has also been shown to be heart healthy.

¹Lancet, 354:447-455, 1999

Keeping up with Dr. McDougall

Recommended Books:

(Great for Gifts!)

The McDougall Program for Women (Now available in paperback, \$14.95+ S&H) • *The McDougall Program for a Healthy Heart* • *The McDougall Quick and Easy Cookbook* • *The McDougall Program—Twelve Days to Dynamic Health*. Found in bookstores or order at (707)576-1654; fax: (707)576-3313; (800)570-1654; on the web: <http://www.drmcDougall.com>

Instant Healthy Meals

Dr. McDougall's Right Foods. 16 Items: Cereals, Soups and Meals in a cup. Four new meals available: Chili w/Beans & Corn Chips, Mashed Potatoes—Country Garden Style, Oatmeal & Barley w/Real Peaches & Raspberries, and Oatmeal & Barley w/Real Bananas & Maple. Found in grocery and natural foods stores or by phone: (800)367-3844 or fax: (650)635-6010; On the web: <http://www.rightfoods.com>.

McDougall Program at St. Helena Center for Health

Transform your life for good in beautiful Napa Valley. Look and feel better in just 12 days. The McDougall Program will change your life forever and put you on the road to dynamic health:

- Reach your ideal weight
- Watch your cholesterol and blood sugar levels fall
- Decrease your dependence on medications
- Manage stress
- Increase endurance for work and play
- Control serious health problems, such as diabetes and high blood pressure
- Reduce risk for cancer, arthritis and heart disease

The McDougall Program at St. Helena Center for Health was rated the No.1 weight loss and health-enhancing program in the country by Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Take charge of your health. Experience the program that has enabled thousands to change their diet and improve their health and quality of life. Join Dr. John McDougall and his team of professionals in the Napa Valley—residential programs begin on April 2, May 7, and June 4, 2000. For reservations and information, please call us or visit our website:

www.sthelenahospital.org

McDougall Programs at St. Helena Center for Health
800-358-9195

McDougall Costa Rica Adventure

July 31-August 7, 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.

Join us in El Ocotal, a paradise on the northwest coast of Costa Rica

Our first night will be spent in San Jose and then we depart for El Ocotal Hotel, a first class luxury oceanside resort with views that take your breath away. Each room has its own terrace overlooking the blue Pacific. The lobby and restaurant, perched atop a knoll surrounded by water on three sides and with El Ocotal's third swimming pool below, is regarded as one of Costa Rica's most picturesque spots. In addition, John and Mary McDougall will be providing education on the McDougall program. All meals are pure-vegetarian, low-fat, and delicious. The bar offers tropical cocktails, a varied wine list and both local and imported spirits...and yes, the tap water is safe to drink.

Our own naturalists will guide us to the national parks, wildlife reserves, nearby towns, and other points of interest. We have five day-long excursions planned for you, including horse-back riding or a wagon ride through the rain forest, Class 1 to 2 (not rough) white water rafting, swinging through the canopy of the forest, and boating up an estuary. The animal and plant life is exotic. You can spend as much time as you want relaxing, swimming, snorkeling, SCUBA, or on any land excursions.

The total cost of the trip is \$1450 per person (singles \$1850) and is all inclusive (This does not include transportation and airfare to and from San Jose.). **This means all activities, adventures, boat trips, SCUBA, and snorkeling trips, meals, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages (local spirits, wines and beers), and transfers are included.**

We have arranged special low-cost, group-based airfares, and have other money-saving tips and discounts to offer. Please call us for details today at (800)570-1654. Deposit is \$400 per person (fully refundable until March 15, 2000, balance due May 1, 2000).

For more information or reservations call (800)570-1654 today!



Blood pressure drugs may be making you stupid

Antihypertensive medications are among the most commonly prescribed drugs today. However, while they may work, they don't come without side effects—the latest of which we could all do without! They have recently been found to diminish brain function in older adults. The worst culprits, it appears, are the calcium channel blockers, or CCBs.

In a recent Canadian study, doctors measured the cognitive function of 509 subjects over five years. Seventy-five percent of the participants who were regularly taking calcium channel blockers demonstrated a decline in cognitive function, while 59 percent of patients taking other forms of antihypertensive drugs showed a similar decline.¹

About 34 percent of CCB users showed a cognitive-function decline of 10 points or more, as compared with 24 percent of patients receiving other medications.

If you are taking CCBs, you should talk to your doctor about possible alternatives. While it takes more effort on your part, generally, losing weight through exercise and a healthy diet that is low in sodium and fat and high in potassium and fiber is much more effective than taking any medication—with no negative side effects.

It's also important to remember that you don't need to work out strenuously to reap huge benefits. A brisk walk three times a week is plenty to get you started...and to make a difference.

¹Canadian Medical Association Journal, 161:501-506, 1999

Report warns of serious drug interactions with St. Johns Wort

St. John's Wort continues to grow in popularity, and more and more research supports its use in the treatment of depression. In a recent study in Germany, hypericum extracts like St. Johns Wort were found to be more effective than a placebo and just as effective as a prescription medication in the treatment of moderate depression.¹

However, another recent study found that St. John's Wort caused serious side effects when taken in conjunction with certain prescription medications, such as digoxin, theophylline, and cyclosporin. The herbal supplement was found to affect the blood concentrations of medications and in some cases to double the metabolic activity of liver enzymes.² In addition, patients taking regular doses of serotonin-reuptake inhibitors, like Prozac, in addition to St. John's Wort were at increased risk of contracting serotonin syndrome, a potentially fatal condition with symptoms of euphoria, overactive reflexes, confusion, and intoxication.

It's important to note here that the validity of these claims is still being questioned due to the lack of solid scientific evidence supporting the allegations.³

While numerous studies show that St. John's Wort can be effective and is, in most cases, safe, please remember to treat this substance with care. If you regularly take prescribed medication, check with your doctor before taking St. John's Wort.

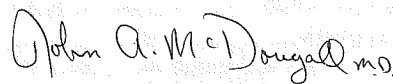
¹BMJ, 319:1534-1539, 1999

²Lancet, 354:2014-2016, 1999

³Arch Intern Med, 159:1957, 1999

Issue wrap-up

Life is filled with stress. Although sometimes it can be painful, it's not unhealthy or unnatural. Stress causes us to get jobs done, problems solved—without stress I know I wouldn't be the person I am today. During times of great human distress and suffering, such as world wars, people actually became healthier—there was less heart disease, diabetes, MS, and obesity during World War II than there is now. Why? Because those tough times made rich foods less available. The way stress can really hurt your health is by causing you to eat more rich foods, smoke more, drink more coffee and alcohol, and forgo your exercise. It's healthy to know what you can control and accept what you can't. You may not be able to control stress, but you can control your habits and behavior.



John A. McDougall, M.D.

P.S. Next month, you'll learn why you need to monitor your heart health even if your blood-pressure readings are low, and you'll hear about SAME, the new "wonder drug" that can relieve both physical AND mental suffering. Also, check out the Web site: www.usda.gov for details on February's "Great Debate," as I debate Dr. Atkins (and others) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

John A. McDougall, M.D., graduated from Michigan State University Medical School and completed his residency training in internal medicine at the University of Hawaii. He is a board-certified specialist in internal medicine and one of the world's leading experts on health and nutrition. As medical director of a revolutionary program at St. Helena Hospital in Napa Valley, California, he has attracted national acclaim for helping people of virtually all ages to overcome chronic illnesses and reverse life-threatening conditions.

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.