

Vol. 2, No. 3

December 2000

Dr. John A. McDougall's

To Your Health

It takes two to tango!

Women deserve a satisfying sex life too, and can have one at any age

There's no doubt that men's sexual dysfunction is out of the closet. Viagra, and the media flurry that surrounded it, took care of that taboo. But what about women? Based on the lack of attention focused on *women's* sexual dysfunction, you'd think it wasn't much of a problem. But you'd be wrong. Experts now estimate that between 30 and 50 percent of women experience some level of sexual dysfunction in their lives.¹ But there's no reason to accept a less-than-satisfying sex life—it's too important to your relationship and to your overall good health and well-being.

Speaking from experience, a sexual relationship in marriage, although not the most important part, is certainly one component of fulfillment and happiness. Even after 29 years of marriage, my wife and I still find each other exciting and are exploring new aspects of the relationship. You can enjoy sex at any age if you're comfortable with your body, and if you learn how diet, lifestyle, health, and herbs can influence sexual arousal and pleasure.

Women's sexuality is actually more problematic than men's. Arousal is not so easily discernible or measurable, and, let's face it, not absolutely necessary for the completion of the act. Many women are uncomfortable talking about it, and not entirely sure that they are *supposed* to desire or enjoy sex. For these reasons (and because until recently the medical ranks were dominated by men), women's sexual function has been virtually ignored. Now that has begun to change.

Not sure if your problem is physical or mental? Your first step is to learn *how*, medically, women become aroused

It helps to know how the physical process of female sexual arousal is supposed to work. A woman might think she has a mental or emotional problem when it comes to sex, but it could be that her partner just doesn't understand what it takes. To many, the female body is

still a mystery, especially when it comes to sex.

When a woman becomes sexually aroused from sensual stimuli like touch and sight, the smooth muscles in the clitoris relax and the arterial walls dilate, resulting in increased blood flow to the area. As the clitoris becomes engorged with blood (much like the penis does during an erection), the expanding arteries put additional pressure on nerves, making the area much more sensitive to touch. The increase in blood flow also affects the vagina, which responds by secreting lubricating fluids.

That medical explanation makes it all seem very simple. But you and I know that hundreds of variables can get in the way of that chain reaction. Most women (and many doctors) think that their sexual problems are all in their heads—and some of them are. But years ago we thought that most of men's sexual problems were psychological too—until research showed them to be 90 percent medical.

As the body of research on women's sexual function grows, I think we'll see similar results. But you don't have to wait for more research to improve your situation. The truth is, there are many things you can do *right now* to improve your sex life, and most of them are completely within your control.

Many women blame menopause for unpleasant intercourse...but thinning, weak tissues can be replenished

Many women accept a lackluster libido as a natural effect of aging and menopause. Yes, menopause may change your sex life—but it doesn't have to be a change for the worse. It should be a liberating time, when you no longer have to worry about pregnancy or birth control.

It's true that women's hormones have a lot to do with sexual arousal and function. And hormones do change during and after menopause. There is, in particular, a drop in estrogen levels. And it just so happens

¹ *Urology* 54:385-391, 1999

Continued on page 2

Dr. John A. McDougall's To Your Health

This month...

Your calcium supplement could be causing toxic lead levels in your body 3

Recipes: Shaking it up at dinner time; Foods that trigger asthma—**EVERYONE** needs to watch out 5

Keeping up with Dr. McDougall 7

News Brief: Introducing... the **REAL** secrets to permanent weight loss 8

Editor: John A. McDougall, M.D.	Customer Service Specialist: Ron Ramsey
Publisher: Jenny Thompson	Copy Editor: Ken Danz
Associate Publisher: Risa Ford	Research Manager: John Probst
Editorial Director: Karen M. Reddel	Editorial Associate: Amanda L. Ross
Associate Editor: Jennifer Taylor Arnold	Designer: Ramsey Brisueño

©2000 Agora South, L.L.C., 819 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission of the publisher. Dr. John McDougall's *To Your Health* is published monthly by Agora South, 819 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201. Subscription rates are \$74 per year. Periodicals postage is pending at Baltimore, MD and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Dr. John A. McDougall's *To Your Health*, 819 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

For questions regarding your subscription, please call or write reader services at 819 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201; tel. (410)223-2611 (9 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT, Mon.-Fri.); fax (410)223-2619. Send cancellations to P.O. Box 206, Baltimore, MD 21203. If, for any reason, customer service is unable to handle your request in a satisfactory manner, you may contact a subscriber advocate. Subscriber advocates can be reached via our telephone hotline (410)223-2690 or via e-mail at subscriberadvocate@agora-inc.com.

All material in this publication is provided for information only and may not be construed as medical advice or instruction. No action should be taken based solely on the contents of this publication; instead, readers should consult appropriate health professionals on any matter relating to their health and well-being. The information and opinions provided in this publication are believed to be accurate and sound, based on the best judgement available to the authors, but readers who fail to consult with appropriate health authorities assume the risk of any injuries. The publisher is not responsible for errors or omissions.

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 to 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.

Women deserve a satisfying sex life too

Continued from page 1

that estrogen plays a role in nerve transmissions and has vasodilatory effects, helping blood vessels dilate and increasing blood flow. It also plays a part in vaginal relaxation and secretion. So, during and after menopause, many women experience vaginal dryness and a thinning of the vaginal tissues, that can make sex unpleasant and painful. But there are a number of ways to deal with these problems.

To improve the strength of vaginal tissues, I recommend a low-dose estrogen cream (available by prescription only) applied directly in the vagina. As little as .025 milligrams of estrogen twice a week (as compared with 1.25 mg daily for some oral estrogen supplements) can produce noticeable results, with fewer of the risks associated with supplemental oral estrogen. (Ask your doctor about premarin or estradiol cream.) A simple lubricant, like KY Jelly, can help with lubrication. When those two problems are addressed, sex becomes a pleasant experience once again—and desire and satisfaction increase as a result!

Estrogen does not hold *all* of the answers

Estrogen isn't the only hormone important to women's sexuality. Testosterone also plays an important role, and the good news is that women's bodies continue to produce it for about 10 years after menopause. In women, testosterone is produced in the ovaries and the adrenal glands and is responsible for stimulating sexual desire.

In fact, this "male" hormone's impact has been clearly demonstrated in studies of women who had their ovaries surgically removed. In one such study, researchers followed 75 premenopausal women who had undergone oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries) and hysterectomy. All of the women received equal amounts of supplemental estrogen, but in addition they randomly received 150 mcg of testosterone, 300 mcg of testosterone, or a placebo.

All three treatments were delivered through a skin patch worn for 12 weeks. After each treatment period, the women crossed over to another treatment group. The women were asked to record the frequency of sexual thoughts, desires, and activity during each treatment period.

During the high-testosterone-dose period, the number of women who reported sexual thoughts and/or activity at least once a week was two to three times higher than at the beginning of the study.²

I'm not suggesting that all women with sexual problems take supplemental testosterone. There are still many questions and concerns about the hormone's possible effects on women, including higher cholesterol levels, increased bone loss, and development of facial hair. The point is that estrogen is not the be-all and end-all of a woman's sexuality, and therefore, her sex life does not have to end with menopause.

Many common medications can dampen your desire

While hormone replacement therapy may improve some women's sexual function, many other prescription medications can have just the opposite effect. For example, beta-adrenergic blockers, a common class of anti-hypertensive drugs (including Coreg, Inderal, Lopressor, Toprol XL, and others) are a common cause of sexual dysfunction in women and men. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) taken for depression, like Prozac and Zoloft, can cause a decrease in sexual inter-

² *N Eng J Med* 343:682-688, 2000

Continued on page 4

Your calcium supplement could be poisoning you! High lead content found in leading brands

Mainstream medicine has been telling women for years to avoid osteoporosis by taking supplemental calcium. And, on that recommendation, millions of women are taking substantial doses every day. Unfortunately, you may be risking your health in doing so. As far back as 20 years ago, authorities recognized that calcium supplements often contained lead. We've been warned of the dangers of lead poisoning. Lead has been banned from paint, gasoline, and any number of other environmental and dietary sources. Although steps were supposedly taken to minimize the risk, a new study shows that many leading over-the-counter calcium supplements still contain significant amounts of lead—and that consumers are not provided with the information they need to make safe choices.

Researchers for the University of Florida at Gainesville analyzed samples of 23 different calcium supplements, of which seven were "natural," 14 were refined, and two were available by prescription only. The study found that the lead content of the supplements varied widely, and some that were thought to be low in lead, contained surprisingly higher levels than expected.

For example, some experts have recommended that consumers avoid "natural" or "oyster-shell" calcium supplements, suggesting that they contain more lead than the others. The study found, however, that while some were at the higher end of the scale, others in the natural category had undetectable lead levels. And some of the widely recommended "refined" or synthetic supplements also contained excess lead. The study also

showed that some preferred name brand formulations had higher lead content than their generic counterparts. Even some of the products made by nationally recognized pharmaceutical companies had high lead levels. In each category, there were at least *some* products found to contain excess lead.¹

How much is too much?

We know that lead is dangerous—it can cause anemia, hypertension, and brain and kidney damage in adults and can stunt children's physical and neurological development. But when it comes to determining what level of lead is safe, there is much disagreement.

Within the past 10 years, the public was still told that it was safe to consume as much as 75 micrograms of lead per day. Today, however, recommendations are much lower, with some extremists advocating permissible intake levels as low as 1 microgram per day. But most authorities fall somewhere in between, agreeing that most people, especially high-risk populations like pregnant and lactating women, as well as infants and children, should consume no more than 6 micrograms of lead per day from *all* dietary sources.²

That's an important distinction, because supplements are not the only sources of lead in our lives. The foods we eat can contain traces of lead as well, contributing significantly to our daily intake of the toxic metal. It's estimated that the average daily dietary intake of lead is less than 5 micrograms, a big improvement over past decades. But depending on the brand of calcium supplement you use, and the dosage you follow, you may be pushed over the edge and exceeding the recommended intake every day.

So exactly how much lead are

we talking about? The study reported the micrograms of lead a person would consume each day if he or she took enough supplements to reach the recommended calcium intake for several specific populations. For example, it is recommended that children get 800 mg of calcium per day, while for osteoporosis prevention, women are told to take 1,500 mg each day. The study also analyzed a range of intake for kidney-dialysis patients, a group that often consumes large quantities of calcium supplements as phosphate binders.

Following recommendations can yield dangerous levels

The highest lead levels were found in a refined over-the-counter calcium supplement called Caltrate, which yielded 1.83 micrograms of lead based on the children's RDA, 3.43 for the osteoporosis guideline, and as much as 20.55 micrograms for a dialysis patient taking 15 tablets a day. Roughly similar results were found in calcium supplements manufactured by Eckerd Drugs and Advanced Nutritional Technologies. These three refined products had the highest levels—higher than those of any natural products. The highest lead level among natural products was found in a supplement called Nature Made, which yielded 1.04, 1.95, and 9.75 micrograms of lead respectively. On the other hand, two different varieties of Tums, one of the most popular over-the-counter calcium supplements, had undetectable lead levels.³

Do you need a calcium supplement at all?

An estimated 5 percent of the population takes calcium supplements on a regular basis, and,

Continued on page 8

¹ JAMA 284:1425-1429, 2000

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

Women deserve a satisfying sex life too

Continued from page 2

est, decreased arousal, less genital sensation, and difficulty achieving orgasm. Central nervous system depressants, as well as anticholinergic drugs taken for colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and peptic ulcers, can have negative effects on a woman's libido,³ and oral contraceptives, decongestants, and antihistamines have also been implicated.

If you have noticed a decrease in sexual interest and take any prescription medications regularly, read the package inserts and talk to your doctor about a possible connection.

High blood pressure can be a silent killer of sexual comfort and orgasm

I've explained how blood flow is critical to the physical processes of arousal and orgasm. Now there's proof that interfering with that blood flow can impact a woman's sexual function. In a study of 211 premenopausal women, researchers found that women with even mild hypertension reported significantly reduced vaginal lubrication and orgasm, and more pain during sex than women without high blood pressure.⁴

This connection has long been recognized in men, and it only makes sense that it would affect women as well. Arteries constricted by the high-salt, high-fat, and high cholesterol American diet are the most common cause of high blood pressure. If the blood can't flow quickly, steadily, and strongly to the clitoris and vagina, the physical manifestations of arousal can't occur. Less lubrication results in painful intercourse, which, of course, is not conducive to orgasm. The inadequate blood flow also makes it difficult to reach the level of sensitivity needed to reach a climax. The end result is unsatisfying, uncomfortable sex—which leads to more infrequent sex—and so the cycle continues.

The answer here, of course, is to lower blood pressure and clear out your arteries—preferably without the use of medications (which, as I mentioned, could interfere with your libido as well). A low-sodium, low-fat, no-cholesterol diet like the McDougall Plan, along with moderate exercise, can lower blood pressure dramatically without drugs.

A strong, healthy body is a sexy, sexual body

Of course, there are other benefits to healthy eating and exercise as well. There is still a significant mental component to women's sexuality, and much of it revolves around self-esteem and body confidence.

Women who aren't happy and don't feel good about themselves have a more difficult time enjoying sex. In fact, studies have shown that women with a negative body image are likely to avoid sex as a result. A poor body image is something that may have taken years to develop—often beginning in childhood—and it can be extremely difficult to overcome.

But, in general, the goal is to have a healthy and strong body, and to be proud of it. That's a very empowering feeling...and a very sexy one. Taking charge of your health is the first step toward developing that positive body image. Adopting a healthy diet and exercise program, as well as giving up bad habits like using cigarettes and alcohol, can have a huge impact on your overall outlook on life. You'll be more positive, you'll have more confidence, you'll feel more energetic, and chances are you'll be more interested in sex. If a healthy body doesn't boost your self-esteem, you may want to talk to a psychologist or your physician about your feelings.

If you're still having trouble conjuring up sexual interest, don't give up; there are promising natural remedies available

If you find that you still need more help, you may want to look into some of the herbal and prescription remedies available. There has been some talk of treating women with Viagra, although studies have reported mixed results. Herbs like ginseng, black cohosh, Tribulus terrestris, deer velvet, muira puama, Epimedium, Maca, and damiana reportedly work to improve women's sexual function. Many health-food stores sell herbal blends specifically designed to boost libido. Feel free to give these a try, but, as with any supplement, read labels carefully, do your homework, and check with your physician before trying them.

Talk openly with your partner—it could be the most important step to take

Opening up the lines of communication among yourself, your partner, and your doctor to bring these issues into the open may be one of the most important steps in regaining your desire. You could also look for a doctor who specializes in sex therapy. I know it's embarrassing, and from experience I can tell it's the last topic most women would bring up at a doctor's appointment. But try not to feel ashamed or too shy. You have every right to expect a satisfying sex life—and in many cases, you can make that happen. It just takes a few simple changes in your lifestyle.

³ *Urology* 54:385-391, 1999

⁴ *Am J Hypertens* 13:640-647, 2000

Try a twist of something new!

Making sure you're eating and feeding your family a *variety* of foods is key to sticking to the McDougall diet. You can't limit yourself to whole grain pasta and black beans every day. Here's a unique favorite that helps shake things up a bit at meal time.

PROSPECTOR STUFFED PEPPERS

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Cooking time: 50 minutes

Servings: 6

6 bell peppers, various colors
2 1/2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
2 cloves garlic, peeled
3/4 cup soy milk
1/3 cup chopped green onions
1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed
several twists fresh ground pepper
dash salt

Cut peppers in half lengthwise, remove seeds and tops. Steam over boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Meanwhile, cook potatoes and garlic in water to cover, until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain. Mash potatoes with soy milk. Stir in onions, corn, pepper and salt. Mound into pepper halves and bake for 20 minutes. Serve with Mushroom Sauce.

Mary's Corner

Recipe

OF THE MONTH

By Mary McDougall



MUSHROOM SAUCE

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Servings: 6

2 leeks, sliced (white and light green part only)
3/4 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
3 1/2 cups water
1/2 teaspoon leaf oregano
1/2 teaspoon leaf sage
1/4 cup soy sauce
1/8 cup Marsala wine
3 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch mixed in 1/4 cup cold water

Place leeks and mushrooms in a pot with 1/2 cup of the water. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add the remaining water, the oregano, sage, soy sauce, and wine. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 8 minutes. Add the cornstarch mixture and cook and stir until thickened. Hint: This delicious sauce may be used as a topping for grains, potatoes, or vegetables.

What causes asthma? Mainstream medicine claims ignorance, but the evidence shows that diet is most often the culprit

Most of us can relate to having bad allergies from pollen, cats, or dust at one time or another...dealing with the clogged sinuses, wheezing, itchy throat, or tightness in the chest. How about a terrible cold when your head is clogged and your chest is clogged and you feel like you can't breathe properly? They're terrible feelings, and hopefully ones that subside after a steamy shower or a cup of hot tea. But for 17 million people in the U.S. alone, the congested, hard-to-breathe feeling is called asthma and is part of daily life. What's more disturbing is that between 1980 and 1994 the number of asthma cases in the United States alone rose by 75 percent. This sometimes fatal disease has become an epidemic—one that could directly affect you in the near future, if it hasn't already. And there's one easy-to-control but little-known culprit that's wreaking havoc in our bodies every day. It's time to learn the facts.

Many doctors and lay people recognize that airborne allergens like dust, mold, and cigarette smoke

can bring on a case of asthma. We also know that asthma can be brought on by exposure to chemicals in the workplace, pollution, cold air, exercise, the list goes on.

But we can't attribute asthma solely to the factors listed above, because (1) they have always existed and (2) that wouldn't explain why rates are so steadily climbing. There's another factor, one that *does and has* changed over time, that can't be overlooked—FOOD. That's right, the foods you eat can have a serious effect on your respiratory system. Through allergies to certain foods or a lack of nutrients in the foods you're eating or even how much you're eating, you could be causing your own disease.

Allergies to food can make you even sicker than allergies to pollen

There is a growing body of evidence showing that by eliminating certain trigger foods from your diet, asthma can be controlled or even eliminated without medication. Dairy products, known as "mucous-

producing foods," are the most likely culprit. Shellfish, other fish, eggs, and nuts are also notorious. Some people even react to wheat and corn. Almost any food could be the one to "do you in." My "elimination diet" (see page 3 of your special report: *New Food Cures for Arthritis and Osteoporosis*) can be very helpful when you're trying to figure out which foods cause problems for you. In general, however, the most effective diet for an asthmatic patient is one that consists of starches, vegetables, and fruits.

The American diet, low in important nutrients, hinders the immune system and creates a breeding ground for respiratory problems

It's not just a food allergy that can cause the wheezing and phlegm of asthma. It's also a deficiency in fruits and vegetables that help protect lung function. The effects of our diet and lifestyle can be plainly seen in developing countries that are just starting to experience Western influences. In fact, research has shown a clear association between the increasing national prosperity in many countries and the incidence of childhood asthma. "Increasing national prosperity" sounds like a good thing. But in these cases, "prosperity" means that more disposable income is spent on the new flood of Western food choices. The latest example of this sad truth is a new study done in Saudi Arabia.

Researchers selected 316 children with a mean age of 12 years for the study. Among that group, 114 had a history of asthma or wheezing in the last 12 months while 202 controls had never had asthma symptoms or wheezing. The study team tested each child for allergies and assessed his or her family history, living conditions, and diet through a series of questionnaires completed by the parents. Rural vs. urban environment, parental smoking, family pets, breast-feeding, and a number of other factors were considered in the analysis.

As expected, a family history of asthma was a strong risk factor. But the researchers found some other interesting associations as well. For one, the frequency of eating at a fast-food restaurant was significantly related to having asthma. Among the asthmatic children, the majority (63.2 percent) reported eating fast food "often" or "sometimes," while the majority of non-asthmatics (52 percent) said they had fast food "rarely" or "never." Among the urban population (87.7 percent of the participants), the lowest intakes of vegetables, vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, sodium, and zinc were significantly associated with asthma.¹ Interestingly, these dietary elements were found to have more influence than whether or not the children's

parents smoked, whether there were pets in the home, or if they had been breast-fed as infants.

The study team proposes several theories as to how these vitamins and nutrients affect the respiratory system. One theory is that a predominance of certain unsaturated fats may interfere with the body's natural immune defenses, allowing allergens to do more harm. Another idea is that a lack of certain vitamins can actually cause asthma. In the study team's other work on asthma, it found that a vitamin C deficiency was related to bronchial hyperactivity while a low intake of saturated and monounsaturated fats (like olive oil) had a protective effect. A low intake of vitamin E has also been linked to the onset of wheezing in adults.

It's not just what you eat, but how much

A lot of adult-onset asthma is caused by acid reflux. When people overeat, or eat too much animal protein in meat, eggs, and dairy products, the stomach produces excess stomach acids in an attempt at digestion. That excess acid can find its way up through the esophagus into the back of the throat, where the acidic vapors are inhaled into the lungs. In reaction to the vapors, the bronchial tubes spasm and the mucosal linings swell...leading to wheezing and breathing difficulty. Ironically, many bronchodilators often prescribed to treat asthma may contribute to acid reflux, by relaxing the esophageal sphincter, the muscle that seals the opening between the esophagus and the stomach.

Protect yourself in all the ways you can

If you have chronic asthma, you may need to be on prescription medication until it's under control. You should also try to minimize all the influencing factors. Reduce the airborne allergens in your home by keeping your house as dry as possible (using a dehumidifier in damp places like the basement if necessary) and by keeping sheets clean, rugs vacuumed, and furniture dusted. If you have pets, make sure they stay out of the bedroom (where most people spend 35 percent of their time).

You also need to find out if you have food allergies. Eliminating dairy products should be your first step, but other foods can be problematic. As I mentioned, the elimination diet is a good checking point. Finally, by adopting a low-fat, plant based diet, you can minimize the fats that weaken the immune system and get a healthy dose of the essential vitamins and nutrients that protect against asthma. So whether you're currently suffering or not, don't let this epidemic continue to spread—it's time to take precautionary steps and make any necessary changes; then, you'll be breathing easy.

¹ Thorax 55:775-779, 2000

Keeping up with Dr. McDougall

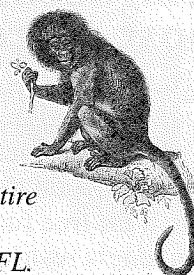
Half-Price Sale on the New McDougall Cookbook!

We'd like to help you or a friend get started on the McDougall Program, so we're offering the *New McDougall Cookbook* for half price (regular price is \$13.95). You'll get over 300 of our favorite, delicious, health-enhancing recipes. For each copy send \$7 plus \$6 S&H for the first book and \$2 S&H for each additional book. Outside the U.S. S&H is \$8/\$3. California residents send 7.5 percent sales tax. To order call (800)570-1654 or (707)576-1654, send orders to P.O. Box 14039, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, or order on our web site: drmcDougall@drmcDougall.com. There are 8 more McDougall books to choose from and audio and video tapes too!

Instant Healthy Meals

Dr. McDougall's Right Foods offers 16 delicious meals. Try Oatmeal & Barley w/ Peaches & Raspberries, Mashed Potatoes Country Garden Style, and Chili w/ Beans & Corn Chips. (Right Foods can also be found in grocery and natural food stores.) Also available: Dr. McDougall's Maximum Weight Loss kit. To order these products call (800)367-3844, fax (650)635-6010 or visit our web site: www.rightfoods.com.

McDougall Costa Rica Adventure July 28, 2001 to August 5, 2001 \$1550 (all inclusive*)



"What a wonderful trip. For the first time in a long time, this vacation provided a great experience for the entire family. All four of us were active from morning to night. We met great people as well." Lee Sheldon, Melbourne, FL.

Join us on July 28, 2001 as we head for El Ocotol, a paradise on the northwest coast of Costa Rica. Stay at El Ocotol Hotel, a first class, luxury, ocean-side resort with modern rooms and views that take your breath away. The restaurant, perched atop a knoll surrounded by water on three sides and with El Ocotol's third swimming pool below, is regarded as one of Costa Rica's most picturesque spots.

Personally-selected 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: horse back riding or a wagon ride through the rain forest, white water rafting, swinging through the canopy of

the forest, a thrilling cable trip over a canyon, and boating up an estuary. The animal and plant life is exotic. Relax or explore as much as you want.

Evening entertainment most nights during and after dinner. In addition, my wife Mary and I will be providing education on the McDougall Program. All meals are pure-vegetarian, low-fat, and delicious.

The total cost is \$1550 per person. (* Trip includes everything except airfare to and from San Jose and airport taxes and gratuities. Ask about our special, low-cost, group-based airfares.) Singles pay \$1950.

For more information or reservations call (800)570-1654. Also visit: www.drmcDougall.com.

Transform your life for good in California's beautiful Napa Valley.

Look and feel better in just 10 to 12 days. The McDougall program will change your life forever and put you on the road to dynamic health.

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

The McDougall Program at the St. Helena Center for Health at St. Helena Hospital was rated the No.1 weight-loss and health-enhancing program in the country by the 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—the 12-day residential programs begin on Jan. 14, Apr. 1, and May 20. Ten-day programs begin Mar. 2, Apr. 27, and June 22. For reservations and information, please call us or visit our Web site:

www.sthelenahospital.org
McDougall Program at the St. Helena Center for Health
(800)358-9195 or (707)963-6207

News brief

Weight-loss secrets from the most successful "losers"

People who are able to lose weight and keep it off are often asked to reveal their secrets. But a new study of "successful losers" shows that there is no magic wand. A low-fat diet and regular exercise are the tickets to a fat-free future. The majority of weight loss maintainers restricted their intake of high-fat and high-sugar foods. In fact, 80 percent of the registry participants met or exceeded the recommendation to eat less than 30 percent of energy from fat, and 35 percent reported consuming less than 20 percent of calories from fat.

Researchers interviewed 355 women and 83 men enrolled in the National Weight Control Registry, an eight-year project that includes some 3,500 people. Members of the registry have lost significant amounts of weight (on average, 60 pounds) and kept it off for an average of five years. When asked how they did it, members of the group consistently brought up the same points—a low-calorie, low-fat diet, combined with regular exercise.¹

The ability to substantially lose weight is not as noteworthy as the ability to keep it off. Most dieters regain one-third of the weight lost within the first year and return to their pre-diet weight within five years. In order to beat those odds, the participants in this study stuck to the habits they had developed during their weight-loss phase. They maintained a low-calorie, low-fat diet (about 1,500 calories per day) with about 56 percent of their calories from carbohydrates and 24 percent from fat. And they also kept exercising, close to an hour a day, doing some moderate physical activity, like walking.² Not surprisingly, my experience has been that the lower the fat intake and the greater the exercise time, the better the results. The McDougall

diet is about 7 percent fat, and I recommend about 30-40 minutes of exercise a day, like walking.

None of this news is surprising. Some may find it discouraging, but I think it's uplifting! You CAN lose a significant amount of weight and keep it off—all through methods completely within your control. Along the way, you will develop healthy habits that will serve you for a lifetime. It may not be as appealing as all the quick and easy fad diets out there, but unlike those gimmicks, this approach *works*. Give it a try—what have you got to lose?

¹ *J Am Diet Assoc* 98:408-413, 1998

² *J Internal Medicine News* July 13, 200, pg. 5

Calcium supplement

Continued from page 3

judging by this study, a significant portion of those people may be exposing themselves to high levels of lead. But the bigger question is this: Why are so many people taking calcium supplements? If you follow a healthy plant-based diet, exercise regularly, and abstain from cigarettes and caffeinated drinks, you shouldn't need a calcium supplement at all. That's the simplest answer.

But if you feel that you need supplements, there are ways to protect yourself from lead exposure. This study showed that refined products are not necessarily safer, and neither are big-name brands. Read labels carefully (make sure to only purchase products when they are specifically labeled as having been tested for lead content!) and calculate the amount of lead you'd be taking in each day based on your dosage.

Make sure to factor in that you're probably already getting a few micrograms of lead just from the food you eat every day. And while you're checking out the label, check for aluminum too—a known risk factor for the development of Alzheimer's disease.

Issue wrap-up

Women's sexual nature is certainly one of the most important things on the minds of both men and women. That's why I find it paradoxical that so little attention has been given to the problems that women face in that area. A satisfying sex life is important for a woman's mental and physical health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of her relationship. I hope this issue offers some insight for women and men, or at least acts as a good start for understanding and communication on this topic. Remember, a problem shared is a problem cut in half. Open up, share, and feel...sexy!

John A. McDougall, M.D.

John A. McDougall, M.D., graduated from the 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.

He 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*, *The McDougall Program for Maximum Weight Loss*, *The McDougall Program for Women*, and *The McDougall Program for a Healthy Heart*. His face will be familiar to many from his television appearances on CNN, *The Phil Donahue Show*, and other programs.