



Dr. John A. McDougall's

# TO YOUR HEALTH

## The PR spin doctors strike again!

It happened again the other night. I turned on the TV, and there it was: a new commercial from my friends in the dairy industry. In the ad, a milkman approaches a dark castle with a delivery only to find himself confronted by a gathering of superheroes. Assuming that he is a superhero as well, the group asks the milkman about his nemesis. He replies that he is the fighter of weak bones! And his strong-bones sidekick? Milk, of course! If I had had something handy to throw at the television, I just might have.

No matter how often we're confronted with the dairy industry's monstrous PR machine, it never ceases to amaze and anger me. For decades, enabled by the media, it has worked to spin a deceptive web around the so called "health benefits" of drinking cows' milk. In fact, *millions upon millions of dollars* have been spent trying to convince us all to drink up. The result? Generations of innocent people misled to believe that milk products are good for them.

I, too, grew up on milk. It was a staple of my diet for 25 years. So, I know it's difficult to believe. But the truth is right there in black and white—in the actual studies funded by the dairy industry itself.

A very careful and detailed review of the science reveals the ongoing deception. The PR spin doctors have taken advantage of the fact that the majority of people won't read the full studies themselves, and the mainstream establishment continues to let them get away with it.

### Every single scientific study about milk points to one conclusion:

Cow's milk is indeed a perfect food...*but only for baby cows*. When you hear friends, co-workers, family members, and doctors protest that milk has been "proven to build healthy bones," please do bring up THESE recent studies:

**FACT:** It's right there in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Two scientists reviewed the data from all 57 studies published since 1985 concerning dairy products and bone health. First, they found that 53 percent

of the results did not show a benefit from dairy. Then they weeded out the studies with weak evidence or poor techniques. Of the 21 remaining studies, 57 percent again showed no benefit from dairy, and another 14 percent found that dairy products actually weaken bones!<sup>1</sup>

**FACT:** In 1985, the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* published a study supported by a grant from—guess who? The National Dairy Council.<sup>2</sup>

The authors made every effort to paint a pretty picture for their benefactors. But careful reading brings out the truth. The last table in this paper casts the fatal blow. Over the course of the year, the women who supplemented their diet with 24 ounces of low-fat milk each day lost twice as much bone mass as women in the control group!

**FACT:** In October 1999, the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* published an article titled "Dietary Changes Favorably Affect Bone Remodeling in Older Adults," sponsored, not surprisingly, by the International Dairy Foods Association.<sup>3</sup>

This study didn't measure bone strength directly. Instead, it measured levels of hormones and other substances in the blood and urine that are considered markers of bone health. These markers did increase in those consuming three servings of milk each day. But a closer reading reveals that over 40 percent more of the participants in the milk group were taking hormone replacement therapy than controls (30 vs. 21). Well, we know that HRT improves bone strength, so, that being the case, the results of the study can hardly be attributed to milk. And that's just *one* of the claims made in this study.

**FACT:** The same study suggests that some of the positive bone-strengthening results are attributable to a growth hormone (IGF-1) that increases in your body when you drink milk. In the three-servings-a-day milk group, serum levels of this growth hormone increased 10 percent in just 12 weeks!<sup>4</sup> And the dairy industry positioned this as a positive result of drinking milk.

The real story? When cows are given a recombinant bovine growth hormone meant to increase milk production, it, in turn, increases the IGF-1 that's in the milk. In humans, this IGF-1 stimulates cell multiplication

<sup>1</sup> *Am J Clin Nutr*, 72:681-689, 2000

<sup>2</sup> *Am J Clin Nutr*, 41:254-263, 1985

<sup>3</sup> *J Am Diet Assoc*, 99:1,228-1,233, 1999

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

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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 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.

and inhibits cell death (apoptosis). The levels in your body also increase as calorie and protein intake increase. In other words, this increased IGF-1 may be passed along to humans through dairy consumption. And what the dairy industry didn't tell us is that this over-stimulation can actually cause cancer.<sup>5</sup> In fact, major studies have linked IGF-1 to many types of cancer, including breast, colon, lung, and prostate<sup>6,7</sup>.

**The dairy industry knows the truth—but spends millions to prevent it from leaking out!**

The fine print at the end of these studies and most others done on the benefits of milk reveal the funding sources, and almost all of them carry names like the National Dairy Council, the National Dairy Board, and the International Dairy Foods Association.

While these groups can't control what science reveals, they *can*—and *DO*—control the message that reaches the public. They know that few people, not even many doctors, will pore over the tedious language of a medical-journal article. So they issue press releases highlighting the “results” of the studies. Surprise! The press releases always show a benefit—no matter what the study found.

**Spread the *real* message about milk**

Remember, you can get all the calcium you need from a diet that's full of whole grains and green vegetables. And if you're looking for something for your cereal, there are plenty of great substitutes. Try rice milk, nut-based milks, or low-fat soy milk (use soy products in moderation), all readily available at your local grocery store. You can also substitute fruit juice for milk on cereal or just some extra water when cooking hot cereal. Give it a try today.

<sup>5</sup> *Science*, 249:875-884, 1990  
<sup>6</sup> *BMJ*, 321:847-848, 2000

**SAVE UP TO \$180 THIS YEAR—  
and Improve Your Health Too...  
By throwing your vitamin E capsules in the trash!**

Do the math and those little yellow capsules add up to a BIG yearly expense. I'm looking right now at an ad selling 60 typical vitamin E capsules for about \$15. Take one a day, and they're costing you \$90 a year. Take two a day (as many do), and your yearly expense is \$180!

*But are they really doing you any good?*

Maybe you know that there's been a big debate lately over vitamin E supplements. Do they really help prevent heart disease? Or are they merely transferring money from *your* pocket to the coffers of some vitamin company?

**The latest research says “Save your money!”**

For many years, studies tipped the scales in the vitamin's favor. Some researchers theorized that vitamin E could block the oxidation of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol. Some studies even suggested that it might prevent the formation of blood clots.

Now, however, very recent and extensive research shows that vitamin E supplementation has *no discernable heart benefit*. The latest example was a trial conducted at the University of Pennsylvania:

- Thirty healthy men and women received varying doses of vitamin E

or a placebo for eight weeks.

- Then, through urine tests, the researchers assessed vitamin E's impact on their LDL cholesterol oxidation.
- The result? *Vitamin E had no impact at all, at any dose.*<sup>1</sup>

And this study is simply the latest one in a growing body of prominent research debunking the vitamin E myth:

- The Heart Outcomes Prevention Study (HOPE) found *no benefit* from giving 400 IUs of vitamin E to patients at high risk for cardiovascular disease—even after 4 1/2 years of treatment.<sup>2</sup>
- The GISSI-Prevenzione study provided recent heart-attack survivors with 300 mg of vitamin E for 3 1/2 years, and saw *no impact* on cardiovascular health.<sup>3</sup>

The list goes on and on. And no matter how you combine different factors, you get the same result: *Vitamin E supplementation simply doesn't help your heart.*

### So why are so many people still taking vitamin E?

Partly, no doubt, because *doctors are still recommending it as a heart-health supplement!*

Now isn't that strange? Doctors like to think of themselves as scientists, yet they're going against the latest and best research!

Why? Well, their thinking is that it can't *hurt* and *might* help (despite the evidence to the contrary). But not so fast, fellow M.D.s!

Granted, vitamin E has a low risk of adverse side effects. But it is *not completely* without risk. **At doses of over 800 IUs per day, it can weaken the immune system, impair sexual functioning, increase the risk of blood clots, and alter thyroid and pituitary metabolism.** It can interact with prescription medications, especially blood thinners like coumarin. And the fact is, the long-term safety of vitamin E supplements has not been tested.<sup>4</sup>

Let's face it—vitamin supplementation, in any form, is medication. And medication should only be taken with a clear, defined, measurable outcome in mind; an outcome that cannot be achieved through any other means. That's certainly not the case here. If you want to decrease your LDL levels, decrease your total cholesterol levels, and improve your heart health, here's what to do:

### The fastest and best way to build a healthy heart is also the cheapest...**FOOD, FOOD, FOOD!**

If you want to unleash the *antioxidant* powers of vitamin E, you don't have to go any farther than your local grocery. It's no accident that people who avoid

meat and instead rely on plant foods tend to have higher levels of vitamin E in their blood than do their meat-eating counterparts. Mangos, broccoli, almonds, peanuts, and green leafy vegetables like spinach and Swiss chard are just a few of the delicious, natural sources of this vitamin.

### Watch cholesterol levels fall up to 100 points in less than two weeks

Better still, try eating *only* plant-based foods; you'll witness a miraculous change for the better in your heart health—a change far beyond the power of any supplement.

Just look at my patients' results. After *only 11 days* at the St. Helena clinic, following a plant-based, whole-grain meal plan, rich in fruits and vegetables, the average patient reduces his or her cholesterol level by *28 points!* Patients who start at higher levels, say at 300 mg/dl or above, can see their readings fall as much as *100 points!* And by continuing on a healthy eating plan, many of my followers maintain total cholesterol levels of around 150 mg/dl—a point that reflects a truly healthy heart, with virtually no risk of heart disease.

So if you want to build a strong heart, choose **FOOD** as your foundation—not some flavor-of-the-week supplement. While medical researchers continue to debate the value of vitamin E and the hundreds of other supplements that come into and out of favor, save your money—and save your heart!

<sup>1</sup> JAMA, 285:1,178-1,182, 2001

<sup>2</sup> N Engl J Med, 342:154-160, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Lancet, 354:447-455, 1999

<sup>4</sup> www.vitaminsplus.com

### Coming Soon...

**Get instant medical updates, weight-loss tips, delicious recipes, and more...for free!**

When you first subscribed to *To Your Health*, I made a promise to give you everything you need to keep you and your family as healthy, strong, and fit as possible!

Unfortunately, there just isn't enough space in each issue to include all that I uncover in my research each month. But now I've found the perfect way. I'm excited to offer you a new free e-mail service. This special "e-alert" is a perfect companion to the newsletter. It will provide: updates and further research on past articles, weight-loss and exercise tips, Q&As, success stories, new recipes, and more!

And, best of all, you'll get it instantly—whenever we have something to report or share, we'll send you an e-mail. That's it!

This new free service is coming soon. More details in next month's issue.

# Folic acid isn't just for women and babies anymore ...and vitamins won't give you enough!

You've probably heard that folic acid is important to good health—especially if you're a woman in her childbearing years and concerned with birth defects.

But reams of research also show that folates (which are found in many vegetables, whole grains, and legumes) can dramatically cut your risk of heart disease—regardless of your sex or age.

And a new study shows that you may not be getting enough folic acid, even if you're taking supplements. While most standard pills contain just 400 micrograms—the new study shows that 800 mcg every day can work wonders. In fact, that "double dose" lowers plasma homocysteine levels as much as 25 percent, which, in turn, lowers your risk of cardiovascular death by as much as 15 percent.<sup>1</sup>

## UP your folic-acid intake with food! (And make homocysteine levels go DOWN)

So what is homocysteine and why is it so dangerous to your heart?

It's an amino acid that's natural to your body—but high levels have been linked with everything from osteoporosis to senility.<sup>2</sup> The most compelling connection has been found between homocysteine and heart disease. In fact, one recent study found that men with the highest homocysteine levels had nearly *four times* the risk of ischemic heart disease as compared to men with normal homocysteine levels.<sup>3</sup> Four times the risk! But the good news is that homocysteine levels are powerfully affected by *the foods we eat*. And eating the right foods is the easiest, cheapest, and healthiest way to make sure you're getting your 800 mcg of folic acid every day.

## Double up on folates—without much effort with plenty of beans, peas, and greens!

Let me repeat: While the USDA recommends 400 mcg of folic acid every day, *the new study shows you may need twice as much.*

Doubling the recommended daily allowance may sound intimidating, but it's actually a cinch. One cup of orange juice alone provides about 100 micrograms. Delicious vegetables like green beans, green peas, lettuce, cabbage, spinach, mustard greens, kale, Swiss chard, and legumes contribute between 80 and 160 micrograms per serving. For a whopping dose of folic acid, try some black-eyed peas or lentils; a serving of either will provide more than 160 micrograms of folate.

Eating meals that are rich in fruits, vegetables, and legumes can help you reach the 800-mcg mark with little effort. And, in addition, those same vegetables contain no cholesterol, are very low in fat, and

are high in dietary fiber, potassium, and other nutrients that fight many diseases from birth defects to strokes.

**HINT:** To get the most folates out of your foods, eat *uncooked* vegetables as often as possible (see box below). Cooking can cut a vegetable's folate content by as much as half! And be sure not to overcook your beans and lentils. Some tips: Pile your sandwich with raw spinach leaves instead of the usual lettuce. Mix up some refreshing cold salads with green beans and green peas, or nosh on tangy cabbage slaw. Surprise your family with a delicious vegetarian hoppin' John, rich in black-eyed peas.

For more information on folate-rich foods and for some great recipes, see page 5. These foods will not only boost your folate intake and decrease your homocysteine level but also provide you with many other healing vitamins and phytonutrients. Now *that's* a recipe for good health!

<sup>1</sup> Arch Intern Med, 161:695-700, 2001

<sup>2</sup> J Nutr, 130:365S-368S, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Arch Intern Med, 158:862-867, 1998

## SUNNY FRESH VEGETABLE DIP

You might not think that plain raw veggies, which are very high in folic acid, are the most exciting snack. But how about when they're accompanied by a creamy, flavorful dip to zest them up? Here's one that's delicious. If you keep a Tupperware container filled with it in your refrigerator (this dip will last several days if it's not eaten immediately), the carrot sticks, mushrooms, celery stalks, and strips of crispy peppers will be much more enticing!

Servings: 2 cups

Preparation time: 10 minutes

16 ounces Mori Nu Lite tofu, drained  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 tablespoon cider vinegar  
1/3 cup canned, roasted red peppers (Roasted red peppers are sold in jars in the supermarket.)  
1 teaspoon chili powder  
several dashes Tabasco sauce  
1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)

Combine tofu, lemon juice, and vinegar in a food processor. Process until smooth. Add peppers and chili powder. Process for several minutes until very smooth and creamy. Add Tabasco and salt to taste.

**Hint:** This dip is also great with fat-free corn chips, as a spread for crackers or bread, and on baked potatoes.

**Protect your heart, bones,  
and mind!  
Boost folic-acid intake deliciously  
with beans, lentils, whole grains, and  
other EASY mealtime pleasers!**

### **HOPPIN' JOHN**

*Traditionally, hoppin' John is served on New Year's Day and is supposed to promote good luck all year. Hint: I never limit this delicious dish to just one day a year!*

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Cooking time:** 15 minutes

**Servings:** 4-6

Cooked rice needed

**Note:** Using canned beans makes this very quick and easy

- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onions
- 3/4 cup chopped celery
- 1 teaspoon bottled minced fresh garlic
- 2 15-ounce cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1 dash salt
- several twists freshly ground pepper
- 1 dash liquid smoke
- Tabasco sauce to taste (Make this as spicy or mild as you want.)
- 2 cups cooked brown rice

Place 1/2 cup of the broth in a medium saucepan. Add the onions, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 3-4 minutes. Add black-eyed peas, remaining broth, bay leaf, oregano, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and cook uncovered over low heat for 5 minutes. Add liquid smoke and Tabasco sauce to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 more minutes. Remove bay leaf. Stir in cooked rice, adding more Tabasco and liquid smoke if desired.

## **Mary's Corner**

# **Recipes**

**OF THE MONTH**

*By Mary McDougall*



**Hint:** Instead of adding the cooked rice at the end, this may be served as a sauce over the rice or other whole grains.

### **MORROCAN GARBANZOS AND GREENS**

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes

**Cooking time:** 12-13 minutes

**Servings:** 4-6

- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 3/4 cup chopped onions
- 1 teaspoon bottled minced fresh garlic
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 4 cups chopped Swiss chard
- 2 15-ounce cans garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- Tabasco sauce to taste
- Several twists freshly ground pepper

Place 1/2 cup of the vegetable broth in a non-stick frying pan. Add onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 3-4 minutes. Mix the garlic, tomato paste, coriander, cumin, and red pepper in a small bowl. Add to onions and mix well. Then add the remaining vegetable broth and mix again. Add chard, garbanzos, and tomato sauce. Cook, stirring frequently, for 8 minutes. Season to taste with Tabasco sauce and freshly ground pepper. Serve warm or cold.

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## Kitty litter may not be a threat to pregnant women—But meat? That's another story!

Physicians routinely tell their pregnant patients to refrain from cleaning out the kitty litter in order to avoid getting *toxoplasmosis*. It's a dangerous, infectious disease that mothers can pass on to their newborns, causing learning difficulties, vision loss, and sometimes even death.

**It may not be kitty litter that poses the biggest threat to pregnant women, but what's in the fridge!**

A recent study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that the link between house cats and toxoplasmosis is actually quite weak. Although this may be good news for cat lovers, I still recommend steering clear of the litter box until more research has been done. But what's more surprising about this study? Researchers found that there IS a direct link between toxoplasmosis and something that might be in your refrigerator! Let me explain.

**A recent study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that the link between house cats and toxoplasmosis is actually quite weak.**

**Over 50 percent of infections were attributed to eating certain types of food**

At five medical centers in Italy, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and France, researchers identified 252 women infected with toxoplasmosis and 858 uninfected women. They then studied the women's exposure to a variety of risk factors. Here's what they found:

- that there was no association (in this case) between toxoplasmosis infection and the presence of cats in the household<sup>1</sup>
- that up to 63 percent of all toxoplasmosis infections could be attributed to eating *undercooked or cured meat*
- that there were other risk factors as well, including contact with soil (6 percent to 17 percent), eating unpasteurized dairy products (5 percent to 14 percent), and traveling outside Europe, the United States, and Canada (1 percent to 9 percent)

**NOTE:** Don't put kitty up for adoption, but do play it safe. Pregnant women would still be wise (and relieved!) to have someone else clean the litter box for nine months. Cat feces *are* the perfect hosts for the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasites that cause the disease, and any risk of contamination during pregnancy is too high.

But, even more importantly, pregnant women should not eat raw or undercooked meats, or cured meats like salami.

**A weakened immune system could put you at risk for toxoplasmosis**

Furthermore, all people with weakened immune systems, for example, those with HIV or AIDS, those undergoing chemotherapy, and sometimes the elderly, should take precautions as well. While most people's immune systems can successfully fight off the *Toxoplasma* parasite, it can wreak havoc on those whose natural defenses are down.

Finally, let me gently suggest that the most effective way to avoid undercooked meat is to avoid meat, period. There are many other delicious—and safe—sources of protein for mothers-to-be. Kidney beans provide as much protein as beef without the inherent health risks. Whole grains, nuts, legumes, and some vegetables, such as Brussels sprouts and broccoli, are all good

sources. In fact, it is impossible to not get enough protein from a diet based on starches like potatoes, corn, and rice, along with additional fruits and vegetables. And once you've adapted your eating habits to protect your unborn child, why not stick with them? Live the rest of your life—and all of your child's life—meat-free. You'll end up with more healthy years to enjoy parenting, grandparenting, and beyond!

**Note:** While nursing and/or eating meat-free for more than three years, add a non-animal source of B<sub>12</sub> to your diet—at least 5 micrograms daily.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch Intern Med*, 160[7]: 1,009-1,013, 2000

<sup>2</sup> *J Am Col Nutr*, 19: 738-744, 2000

<sup>3</sup> *Diabetes Care*, 22: 45-49, 1999

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# Keeping up with Dr. McDougall

## Join us on a rejuvenating Costa Rican Adventure—and experience ECOTOURISM as its best!

Over the past six years, Mary and I have taken groups to Costa Rica five times. It's our favorite, most popular health getaway. Now, before we hang up our Costa Rica "shoes" for a while, we're planning one final trip; the best ever. You will experience the warmth of the native Costa Ricans and feel safe in the arms of this beautiful country. And, best of all, this is a vacation where you'll come home feeling healthier, more energetic, and yes, even THINNER than you did before! That's almost impossible to say about most other vacations.

So, please join us on July 28, 2001, as we head for El Ocotol, a paradise on the northwest coast of Costa Rica. And feel free to bring your spouse, children, grandchildren, and friends—this trip is for people of all ages and all activity levels.

El Ocotol hotel is a first-class, luxury, oceanside resort with modern rooms and views that will take your breath away. The restaurant, perched atop a knoll surrounded by water on three sides, is regarded as one of Costa Rica's most picturesque spots.

Personally selected naturalists will guide us to the national parks, wildlife reserves, and charming nearby towns. We have five daily excursions planned for you. You can relax or explore as much as you want.

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

The total cost of the trip is \$1,550 per person, and it is all-inclusive, except for airfare to and from San Jose and airport taxes and gratuities. Be sure to ask about our special, low-cost, group-based fares when you call to reserve your space. (Singles pay \$1,950.)

For more information or reservations, call (800)570-1654 or (909)715-3155. Also, visit: [www.drmcDougall.com](http://www.drmcDougall.com).

And, remember, this is your last chance for a while. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime summer excursion. See you at the airport!

CST# 204 9430-50

## Regain lost health and appearance and take control of your future...

Now you can learn more about the complete McDougall Program on videotape. Get six tapes of highly entertaining, life-changing information. This exact presentation has dramatically improved the health of thousands of people and allowed them to:

- become trim for the rest of their lives (Many lose over 10 pounds in 12 days and more than 100 pounds in less than a year!)
- discontinue their blood-pressure, diabetes, and heart medications
- free themselves from the pain of crippling arthritis, headaches, and body aches
- lower cholesterol 28-65 points in just 11 days
- avoid future health problems

### Now you have a simple and effective way to help yourself

Try this program for 12 days! And invite your loved ones to participate. They may have resisted change—until now.

The regular price for this complete, life-changing set of videos is \$149.95 plus \$14 s&h. But, for a limited time, I have a special introductory offer for you. As a newsletter subscriber, you pay just \$119.95 plus \$14 s&h. Better still, if you order TODAY you'll receive a FREE copy of the national best seller *The McDougall Program—Twelve Days to Dynamic Health*. This is a \$14.95 value, absolutely free if you order today! Call (800)570-1654 or (909)715-3155; fax (707)538-0712, or email: [drmc-dougall@drmcDougall.com](mailto:drmc-dougall@drmcDougall.com).

Note: This program is not available through Agora Publishing.

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

Come celebrate the 15th anniversary of the McDougall Program at St. Helena Hospital in the beautiful Napa Valley of California and get a \$400 discount per person until June 29, 2001!

### Celebrate our 15th Anniversary Special with a \$400 discount!

You'll change your life for the better with this 10- or 12-day live-in experience.

Program dates:

**June 22 to July 1 (10-day)**

**July 13 to July 22 (10-day)**

**August 17 to August 26 (10-day, no discount)**

Voted the #1 weight-loss program in America by the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine. You CAN lose weight, get your health back, and reduce or even eliminate your medications!

To sign up or receive more information, please call (800)358-9195; (707)963-6207 or visit our web site: [www.sthelenacenterforhealth.org](http://www.sthelenacenterforhealth.org).

## Forget fish oil and lower your cancer risk

Why forget fish-oil supplements? Well, as I detailed in the March 2000 issue of *To Your Health*, the fat and cholesterol in these supplements are likely to cancel out any potential heart benefit (which is why most people take them in the first place).

And here's the latest reason. A new study is showing that fish oil may have a more insidious effect on your health—weakening your immune system and suppressing your body's cancer-fighting system.

In fact, this Oxford University study found that the fatty acids in fish oil (*eicosapentaenoic acid*, or EPA, and *docosahexaenoic acid*, or DHA) actually decrease natural-killer-cell activity by an average of 48 percent! (Natural killer cells are white blood cells that attack tumor cells and infected body cells. They play a key role in cancer and disease prevention.) The researchers also studied the effects of other types of essential polyunsaturated fatty acids, such as *alpha-linolenic acid* (ALA), found in flaxseed oil, and *linolenic acid* (GLA), found in evening primrose oil.

Neither of these types had an effect on natural-killer-cell activity.<sup>1</sup>

*If you're taking fish-oil supplements, don't worry. Just stop right now! The good news is that the natural killer cells rebounded to normal levels within four weeks after the fish-oil supplementation had been stopped.*

If you're concerned about getting an adequate amount of essential fatty acids, fine—but there are safer ways to do it. A diet rich in starches and leafy greens contains plenty of EFAs for someone who's not suffering with specific problems like very dry skin or arthritis. For those who need more, certain plant foods, like flaxseed, evening primrose seeds, soybeans, avocados, and olives, contain more concentrated forms. But these also contain an abundance of fat and can derail your weight-loss efforts. And, if your main concern is heart health, just be sure to stick to low-fat, low-cholesterol, plant-based foods and get regular exercise. That's the very best way to protect your heart—and, as a side effect, it will strengthen your immune system!

<sup>1</sup> *Am J Clin Nutr*, 73:539-548, 2001

## Hate hard exercise? Take it easy! A stroll around the block may be all you need to cut your heart-disease risk in half!

That's the amazing message out of a new Harvard University study. Researchers there followed 39,372 women for four to seven years and found that exercise levels well below the current recommendations still provide all the benefits. While most experts recommend 30 minutes of "moderate-intensity" aerobic exercise five days a week, this study discovered benefits at much lower intensity levels of just two miles per hour.<sup>1</sup> It also found that in order to cut your risk of heart disease by as much as half, you only need to "pound the pavement" for around an hour a week!

Translation: Take a pleasant 15-minute *stroll* four days a week!

*Better still, walking can be better than jogging!*

Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine found that walking at a faster pace will burn at least as much energy as jogging at the same

pace. In this case, 15 healthy women walked and jogged on treadmills at a variety of paces, while their energy expenditure, heart rate, and oxygen consumption were measured. At a 4.9-mile-per-hour pace (8 km/h), walking burned slightly more calories than jogging; the difference increased as the pace climbed.<sup>2</sup>

### Strengthen your heart, burn calories, and get healthy the painless way

The take-home message? Walking is good for you! Even walking short distances at a relatively slow pace can strengthen your heart, burn calories, and improve your health. I'm not saying that one walk a week is enough to give you a healthy heart, but you don't have to "go for the burn" and pound your joints to see benefits. You may not be the fastest person around the block, but it doesn't matter. You're enjoying health benefits that many thought were saved for the exercise "fanatics," and you're certainly way ahead of those who aren't walking at all!

<sup>1</sup> *JAMA*, 285:1,447-1,454, 2001

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*, 40:297-302, 2000

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