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“Coming to Our Senses” —Embrace Life with all Your Heart

By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

Use it or lose it is the mantra for staying healthy and youthful. The ability to sense and respond to changes in the environment is one of the most fundamental characteristics of a living organism. Whether it be fading eyesight or diminished hearing, loss of balance or a vanishing ability to smell and taste—the erosion of our senses is one of the most frightening aspects of growing old. Understand that your sensory capabilities are much more likely to rust away than to wear out. So if you want your senses to come alive and thrive, you have to fully use them every chance you get!

The average American spends four hours daily “vegging” out in front of a TV; for those over 65, it’s closer to six hours of TV each day! Turn off the TV: the best way to stay dynamic and vigorous is to get off the sofa and embrace life with all your senses.

Stay curious and active. Get outside. Taste and smell the natural goodness of fresh and real food. Get and give massages. Hug your loved ones. Watch the clouds sail overhead. Smell the fresh-cut grass and the roses. Savor the taste of a glass of wine while you enjoy the company of a friend or loved one. Travel and seek out a variety of new experiences.

As one of my patients told me recently, “I find that ‘what the heck’ usually turns out to be the right decision.” This issue of **From the Heart** focuses on ways to reawaken your senses and reinvigorate your life. Enjoy!

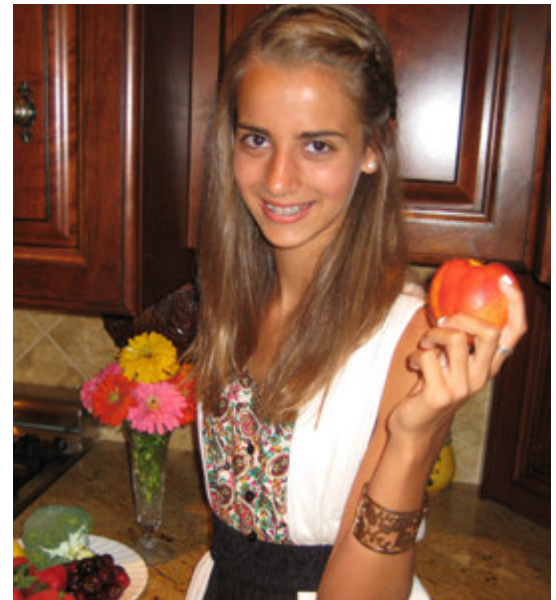
Try This at Home!

This year Kathleen, our 13-year-old daughter, was regularly assigned a “My Own Science” project by her science teacher, Mr. Brian Bartelli. For one of these little home experiments, we decided to see how her system responded to different meals by checking her blood sugar with a home glucometer (blood glucose meter) before and after eating.

Joan prepared her a 450 calorie, high-protein, low-carb breakfast of scrambled eggs, lean ham, and a glass of skim milk. Kathleen gobbled this down and her blood glucose didn’t budge: she had a fasting morning reading of 82 that fell to 80 when we re-measured her glucose 90 minutes after breakfast.

For lunch, Kathleen had a very different meal, consuming a large bowl of white rice dressed with some soy sauce. She drank 16 ounces of a fruit punch. Her blood sugar started at 75, but after this 450-calorie meal, surged to 125 an hour and a half later!

Dinner was a typical O’Keefe-style meal: grilled salmon, a half slice of sourdough bread, spinach salad with cherry tomatoes dressed with extra-virgin olive oil and vinegar, steamed broccoli, and fresh berries for dessert. This meal, also 450 calories, barely raised Kathleen’s blood sugar from 79 to 85 over the same 90-minute span.



Kathleen is learning to love colorful fruits and veggies.

We encourage you to try this experiment on your own. Home glucometers are inexpensive and easy to use. You will be astounded at the drastic differences in your blood sugar readings depending on what you choose to consume. It is a great way to drive home the primary concepts of a healthy, balanced diet.

Keep in mind Kathleen is a very fit and healthy, lean and active, teenager. Her system is about “as good as it gets” for efficiency in clearing sugar from the bloodstream, and still she had a dangerously high spike in blood glucose after a single meal of white rice and high-fructose corn syrup. Your system is probably much less adept at the fundamentally important process of keeping your blood glucose in an optimal range.

Two Easy Rules to Transform Your Meals and Your Life!

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

Gloria is a 56-year-old woman who underwent coronary bypass surgery about five years ago. For much of the last 15 years, she has struggled through one fad diet after another as her weight yo-yoed up and down in an unhealthy range.

Last year she was enthusiastically following the "Cookie Diet" and was down 20 pounds. Predictably, she burned out on the routine of cardboard chemical cookies instead of meals, and now is heavier than ever. I discouraged her from trying another diet fad, and instead to embrace a healthy, natural eating style.

Like Gloria, many Americans' weight and health problems wouldn't exist if they would follow the essence of a balanced diet. It's common sense and very simple. There are only two fundamental rules. With each of your three daily meals you must:

1. Eat a serving of healthy protein.
2. Choose at least two natural colors.

Protein is Key...

So let's get this straight. Protein is not optional. You need it three times each day. Ideally, you should choose a healthy protein such as egg whites, chicken or turkey



breast, fish, lean red meat, whey protein, non-fat dairy, etc. For one of your meals, you might try to choose vegetable protein such as nuts, beans, tofu, edamame, etc. As a rule, the protein should not be more than the size and thickness of the palm of your hand.

Protein is made up of large and complex molecules that take a long time to break down after a meal. That means your system slows digestion and delays emptying of the stomach as it works hard and long to absorb a protein meal. This keeps your blood sugar and triglycerides smooth and steady in the normal ranges.

Additionally, a high-protein meal will keep you filled up much longer than typical, easily digestible high-carb American foods like French fries, white rice, candy, chips, etc. This is key because a meal high in protein and plant fibers prevents food cravings for up to four hours or more. If you are not hungry, it's easy to avoid eating trashy foods for snacks. But when you are starving hungry, you are at the mercy of every box of doughnuts, plate of cookies, or vending machine you happen to come across during your day.

Color Your Life!

Second, you need to choose at least two colors (sorry, M&Ms don't qualify) for each meal, including breakfast. This means eating two or more servings of plants, the fresher and more colorful the better, morning, noon, and night. As a rule, the healthiest things you can put in your mouth, grew in the dirt. Eating



this much produce is not as tough as it sounds; one cup of strawberries (about eight typical-sized berries) equals two servings of produce. Half of a grapefruit is a super-healthy component of any meal, and it counts as one serving of fruit. Avoid fruit juices—they tend to spike your blood sugar. You are better off eating the whole fruit. If you are trying to lose weight, avoid fruit smoothies as well. These are high in calories and have much of the plant fiber broken down by the blender.

There is nothing like fresh produce for improving health and achieving weight loss. However, vegetables are more important than fruits, so try to work at least one vegetable into each of your meals. Vegetables are ideal for promoting fat loss and supercharging your health and vitality. I often have an avocado with cottage cheese as part of my breakfast, or a bell pepper, sliced up and dipped in natural peanut butter. You will have no chance of hitting the nine or more servings of vegetables and fruits per day if you don't start out by consuming at least two servings of produce at breakfast.

Extinguish the Fires

You are unique—one in 7 billion to be precise. The singular combination of your specific set of

genes influenced by your lifestyle, diet, attitude, environment, etc., determines exactly who and what you are. This means that we each have our individual strengths and weaknesses. Chronic inflammation is the common denominator behind about 75 percent of the diseases that sap our vitality, ravage our health, and eventually kill us. Inflammation will seek out and attack you at your most vulnerable spots. If you pay close attention to how you feel after eating a high-calorie junk food meal, like a large cheeseburger with fries and a Coke, especially if you also happen to be stressed or sleep deprived, you can pick up clues about some of your weak spots.

Kelsey complained to me about soreness and redness in the arthritic joints in her hands that she would notice about two hours after over-indulging in sugary or starchy foods. She also had inflamed plaques developing in her coronary arteries that she couldn't feel until she had a heart attack at age 55.

For Wayne, the inflammation caused by a bad diet and a pot belly showed up as pain and aching in his gums an hour or two after pigging out. For many, the sluggishness, mental fog, and fatigue that set in after a large, unhealthy meal are signs that the brain is under siege and bogging down from a flood of free radicals generated by too much sugar and fat.

The amount that your blood glucose rises after eating is one of the most important predictors of how healthy and dynamic you will be in the long run. Ironically, because your doctor will probably only measure a sugar and cholesterol profile after you have been fasting, you may never know about this problem. Multiple times each day you may be spiking your blood sugar into ranges that cause inflammation, and disease and you are probably completely oblivious to this major determinant of your health, appearance, brain function, and longevity. Junk food and most of the other popular, processed food and beverage choices in modern America cause sudden post-meal surges in the blood sugar and fats that stimulate free-radicals and inflammation—basically rusting you from the inside out, and predisposing you to premature aging, and diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, stroke, heart attacks, and diabetes.

Ideally, your blood sugar shouldn't rise above 100 to 110 after a meal. To do this, you will need to eat a healthy, balanced diet, keep your serving sizes reasonable, and stay very physically active. The more excess belly fat you carry, the bigger the spikes in your blood glucose and fat levels after eating a meal; so make it a priority to keep your waist size to less than half your height in inches.



Easy as 1-2-3

Okay, let's summarize: by eating a healthy protein with each of your three daily meals you will help to both control your hunger and keep your blood sugar in an ideal range, not too high or too low. This prevents your body from overproducing the free radicals that cause inflammation from inside, which predisposes to premature aging and disease.

By consuming at least two natural colors with each meal you are getting all sorts of disease-fighting, anti-aging nutrients that "rust-proof" your brain and body. So with every meal your goal is: "Pick a protein and two colors." By choosing good things first, you will be on your way to a whole new you.

Generally, diets are doomed to fail because they focus on avoiding forbidden foods, not on enjoying delicious, healthy and nutritious food. Joan's pick 1 + 2 plan is similar to the Mediterranean diet because it's very simple and easy and the emphasis on fresh produce and healthy protein provides so much flavor that you won't feel deprived.

Estrogen for Post-Menopausal Women?

New thinking on hormone replacement therapy

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

Stephanie is a 51-year-old woman who recently came to see me complaining that her heart was skipping and racing. Although these spells would only last for a few seconds, she found them distracting and worrisome. She also had been waking up in the middle of the night with drenching sweats and a flushed feeling in her face.

Stephanie confided that she was feeling generally more irritable and just less happy than usual in recent months. When we checked her labs, we found that her bad cholesterol was 20 points higher, and her good cholesterol was five points lower than was normal for her. As we both suspected, her hormone levels showed that she was in menopause. After about 40 years of cyclic estrogen production, her ovaries were calling it quits.

We've Come a Long Way, Baby!

A decade ago most doctors would not have thought twice before starting Stephanie on hormone replacement therapy with estrogen and progesterone. The cover of TIME magazine in the mid '90s proclaimed post-menopausal estrogen therapy as the anti-aging hormone for women.

This field was thrown into turmoil when a large and scientifically valid study called the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) published its results in 2002 showing that estrogen, especially when used



with progesterone, increased the risk of blood clots, heart attacks and strokes. The previously popular strategy of estrogen for menopausal women took a sudden "U" turn, and this practice has been decidedly out of fashion among physicians and patients for the past seven years. Yet, reassuring new findings and innovative options are changing our thinking about this complex and important issue of estrogen replacement for women past menopause.

What's New in Hormone Replacement

The latest data out from the WHI and other studies suggests that hormones for the first 10 years after menopause are not only safe, but also may reduce the risk of death

from any cause. A recently reported study of over 700,000 women found that topical (the medical term for treatment applied to the skin) estrogen therapy is safer for a woman's heart than the pill form of estrogen.

Hormone pills that you swallow have to pass through the liver where the estrogen is metabolized into compounds that are different from the estrogens that are produced in the ovaries. On the other hand, topical estrogen is absorbed through the skin straight into the bloodstream, similar to the natural release of hormones from the ovaries directly into the circulation.

Patches for the skin can deliver estrogen at doses that are safe, effective, and easy. The most popular patches are designed to be applied to the skin of the torso, arm or thigh, and changed every three to seven days. If you are considering hormone therapy for post-menopausal issues, remember: safety may be skin deep.

Bio-identical Hormones

Bio-identical hormone therapy is another "hot" topic in this field. Many of the old studies, including the WHI trial, used oral hormone pills which often contain a variety of different estrogens. Some of these are not normally made by human females. It is much more logical to use the specific form of estrogen (17-beta estradiol) that your ovaries made before you went through menopause. Today, it is easy to find estrogen compounds that are exactly the same, biochemically,



Is estrogen replacement right for you?

Here are a few points to ask your doctor about if you are on, or are considering post-menopausal estrogen replacement therapy:

1. Use the lowest dose possible.
2. Try to use topical (applied to skin) hormones.
3. Consider asking for bio-identical (human identical) estrogen therapy.
4. Estrogen replacement is safest for women in the first decade after menopause starts—typically from age 50 to 59.
5. Be very cautious about using hormone therapy if you have a personal or family history of breast cancer, blood clots in the legs, stroke, or heart attack.
6. Have regular check-ups with your gynecologist, internist, endocrinologist, or family practice physician.

as the hormones produced by a healthy young woman's ovaries.

Dr. Marie Griffin is a friend and endocrinologist who is very bright and knowledgeable on the topic of hormone therapy for women. Dr. Griffin says, "With a life expectancy of nearly 90 years for American women today, they are spending about 40 years with deficient or absent sex hormones. Are their brains, bones, GI tracts, muscles, uro-genital tracts, etc. ready for that? Often our male counterparts' testosterone levels fall gradually through the decades to low-normal levels—but not to zero! And when they come in with low testosterone, do we tell them to 'tough it out' because they might get prostate cancer or could have a drop in their HDL (cardio-protective) cholesterol? Heck no! We put most of them on testosterone because it's so central to their health and well-being. I think there's an unintentional double standard in this issue. Estrogen should probably be

offered to many women after having a balanced discussion about the risks versus benefits of estrogen therapy."

Weighing the Risks Versus Benefits of Estrogen Replacement

Many women feel better emotionally and physically when they use hormones early after menopause. Improvements in mood, energy, skin youthfulness, memory, cholesterol levels, sex drive, and bone health are all potential benefits of post-menopausal estrogen. No wonder so many women are interested in hormone replacement! However, there are downsides to consider. Estrogen can increase the risks of breast cancer, blood clots, heart attacks and strokes, especially with high-dose hormonal therapy used for over 10 years.

My friend and collaborator Dr. David Bell, an endocrinologist from

Alabama who is a leading expert on issues related to hormones and heart disease says, "Estrogen therapy around the time of menopause and for up to 10 years afterwards appears to prevent heart disease. In contrast, estrogen in older women, especially those with established cardiovascular disease, can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke."

The issues surrounding hormone therapy for women are complex and need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. So, if you have questions about this, talk it over with your doctor, though probably not your cardiologist, since we generally neither prescribe nor follow women's hormone replacement therapy issues closely.

Incidentally, Stephanie's gynecologist did start her on a low-dose estrogen patch and her palpitations and other menopausal symptoms improved markedly.

Organic Fitness: Back to the Future

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

From the inception of the human genus, homo, approximately 2.4 million years ago, our ancestors lived as hunter-gatherers for approximately 84,000 generations. Survival in the hunter-gatherer mode of life required a large amount of daily energy expenditure in activities such as food and water procurement, social interaction, escape from predators, maintenance of shelter and clothing, etc. This lifestyle represents the exercise patterns for which we remain genetically adapted even today. Dramatic improvements in technology over the past few generations have made our lives ever more convenient but in so doing, have markedly reduced the amount of physical work required in our daily lives.

Especially in recent years, technological advances have in many cases completely eliminated the need for physical activity in our day-to-day routines. I often ask my patients if they have chest pain or shortness of breath when they exert themselves, and they often reply: "I am not sure; I never exert myself."

For hunter-gatherers exercise was not optional—their harsh world required daily physical labor for nearly their entire life. An adult hunter-gatherer would not consider setting off on a run for

recreation or repeatedly lifting a heavy stone simply to improve their fitness level. To the contrary, natural selection endowed them with an instinct compelling them to: "Move when you have to, and rest when you can." Many of their waking hours were necessarily consumed with the physical activities demanded of everyday life. Retirement was not an option for hunter-gatherers. Their activities of daily life were all the "exercise" that Stone Age people would have ever needed to maintain superb general fitness. Instincts to preserve energy and strength conferred survival advantages to hunter-gatherers. These instincts, still present in us today, are now self-destructive in the sedentary over-fed 21st century milieu in which we live. Our inborn tendency to take the path of least resistance while living and working in our ultra-convenient, highly-mechanized environment plays a major role in the health woes plaguing modern Americans.

Go Outside and Play

Although exercise in general confers powerful protection for your heart, outdoor exercise may be more beneficial than indoor exercise. Outdoor exercise offers the opportunity for sunlight exposure, which stimulates vitamin D synthesis in the skin. Vitamin D deficiency is a common and potent risk factor for many health problems including heart disease. Additionally, outdoor exercise, especially in a natural setting, reduces emotional stress and improves mood to a greater degree than indoor exercise. By the way, weather conditions (warm and sunny vs. cold and overcast, etc.)

had no effect on these findings. Interestingly, a recently published study found that a 60-minute walk in a natural outdoor setting improved memory performance and attention span significantly better than a 60-minute outdoor walk through busy downtown urban streets.

Achieving Hunter-Gatherer Vitality and Strength in the 21st Century

The prescription of physical activities listed below is the closest thing you and I will ever have to a cure-all wonder drug. These are the types of daily activities that were required of our ancient ancestors. By incorporating these kinds of exercises into your daily routine, you will be fulfilling your genetic destiny, which will allow you to realize the awesome potential for vitality, resilience, and strength that nature has encoded within your genome.

1. A large amount of light-to-moderate activity such as walking was required. Most estimates indicate average distances covered were in the range of five to 10 miles daily. "Chair today, gone tomorrow." Get off your butt and move every chance you get!
2. Hard days were typically followed by an easy day, but every day a variety of physical activities had to be accomplished just to provide for the basic human needs. The hunter-gatherers typically burned at least 600 to 1,000 calories daily with exercise alone, about three times what the average American adult burns.



Hunter-Gatherer

Activity

Carrying logs
Running (cross country)
Carrying meat back to camp
Carrying young child
Hunting, stalking animals
Digging (tubers in field)
Dancing (ceremonial)
Carrying and stacking rock
Butchering large animal
Walking, normal pace
(fields and hills)
Gathering plant foods
Shelter construction
Tool construction

Modern Equivalent

Activity

Carrying groceries, luggage
Running (cross country)
Wearing backpack while walking
Carrying young child
Interval (high intensity) training
Gardening
Dancing (aerobic)
Lifting weights (vigorously)
Splitting wood with axe
Walking, normal pace
(natural trails, grass, treadmill, etc.)
Golfing, carrying clubs
Carpentry, general
Vigorous housework

Calories burned per hour

781
685
617
588
680
530
433
410
357
345
378
219
189

3. Walking and running were done on natural surfaces such as grass and dirt, and almost never on solid flat rock. Today we do the majority of our walking and running on concrete and asphalt surfaces, and because we are not designed for this, our joints tend to break down earlier.
4. Cross-training is essential and should include exercises focusing on strength-building and endurance and flexibility.
5. Walking was often done while carrying weight loads such as children, water, food, wood, stones, etc. The lack of this regular lifting and carrying likely accounts in part for the common occurrence of osteoporosis (weakening of the bones) today. Look for opportunities to carry things. I often carry my luggage through the airport even though my bag has wheels on it.
6. In general, hunter-gatherers were virtually never overweight or obese, which reduced trauma to their joints.
7. Virtually all of the exercise was done outdoors in the natural world. Outdoor activities improve mood, and make it easier to stick with a long-term regular exercise program.
8. Our ancestors did most of their physical exercise in social settings, usually small bands of individuals who were hunting, gathering or working together on various chores. Even today we find that people who exercise with other people tend to be more enthusiastic and consistent about getting regular exercise.
9. Genetic evidence suggests that humans and dogs have been co-evolving for as long as 135,000 years—back when our ancestors weren't fully human yet and our canine companions were still wolves. This cooperation improved hunting success, protection from predators, and chances of survival for both of the species.
10. Our ancestors regularly engaged in ceremonial and celebratory dancing, sometimes for up to one or two hours. Dancing is an ideal form of exercise that improves fitness and reduces stress.
11. Except for the very young and the very old, all individuals were, by necessity, physically active almost their entire lives.
12. Ample time for rest, relaxation, and sleep was generally available to ensure complete recovery after strenuous exertion.

How You Can Save Money AND Stay Healthy

Rules to follow for filling your prescriptions in today's tough economy!

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

When budgets get tighter, one of the things I often see patients do is cut back and even stop taking their prescription medicines. This isn't just my experience. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll conducted in February found 35 percent of households used at-home medicines instead of going to the doctor; and 21 percent did not fill a prescription for medicine.

While I understand that many prescription drugs can be expensive, the cost of NOT taking your medicines can be even higher. A trip to an emergency room or a hospitalization will pay for a lot of prescriptions!

You do have options in these tough economic times to cut costs, and still stay healthy. With the help of your doctor, it is now possible to get benefits from your prescription drugs at a much lower out-of-pocket expense to you. Here are some tips that you may find valuable.

Go Generic

In America, all prescription drugs, whether brand name or generic, are held to the same exacting standards of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). To be approved by the FDA, generic drugmakers must prove that the drugs are equivalent to the original brand name. In some cases, both the generic and brand-name pills are made by the same company. If the generic option is available and you pay out-of-pocket for your

medications, ask your physician or pharmacist about changing to the less expensive generic drug.

Split the Difference

Many medicines are priced "flat" fashion. This means the cost for the various doses are the same. For example, if you take 20 mg. per month of a cholesterol-lowering drug, but it is available in 20, 40, 60 and 80 mg. doses, we can prescribe the 80 mg. tablet and you can split it into fourths. This reduces the monthly cost of this medicine to one-fourth its original cost.

Some pills are scored for easy splitting, but most brand-name drugs are more difficult to split. However, with the help of an inexpensive "pill splitter," or a pharmacist, this can be done easily. Although the pills sometimes do not split evenly, the minor dose inconsistencies average out from day to day and are generally not a significant problem.

Keep Your Options Open

Many medications, though not generic, are potentially less expensive than others in their class. Studies show that many arthritic patients do as well on less expensive options such as aspirin or other anti-inflammatory agents like ibuprofen or naproxen, as they do on the newer high-priced formulations.



Ask for Free Samples

Many doctors' offices have samples of the newer medicines. However, many of the less expensive older medications, and all of the generics, are not available in free samples. If your income is restricted, ask your doctor about sharply discounted drug programs from the various drug companies.

Shop Around

The price of prescription drugs varies widely from one pharmacy to the next. It is probably well worth your time to shop several pharmacies (Hy-Vee, Wal-Mart, Costco, etc.) to look for the lowest price.

Also, ask for a 90-day supply with three refills if your insurance will cover it. This can save you a substantial amount of money by reducing the number of co-pays.

Many medications come in combinations these days. Some blood pressure medications, for example, often cost no more when combined with a low dose of a diuretic (HCTZ). This markedly

increases the blood pressure lowering action (especially ace inhibitor and beta-blocker classes). Getting “two in one,” combo pills will reduce both the number of co-pays and pills you have to stomach.

Bag It!

A good way to start a discussion about saving money on prescriptions is to put all of your drugs, nutritional supplements and vitamins in a bag once a year and bring them to your pharmacist or your doctor’s office.

We often can cut costs and simplify your regimen. Many times patients are taking a laundry list of drugs that are unnecessary, ineffective, or even potentially dangerous.

On the other hand, many heart patients are not on the life-saving classes of medicines (statins, ace inhibitors, beta-blockers, aspirin, and omega-3 fats). Many times, the different drugs on your list have been prescribed by different doctors. It is important that someone review all your medicines routinely to make sure the drugs you are taking are compatible, necessary and cost-effective.

“Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be.”

*Grandma Moses,
20th Century American
Folk Artist*

Sink or Swim:

Why heading to the pool might just save your life!

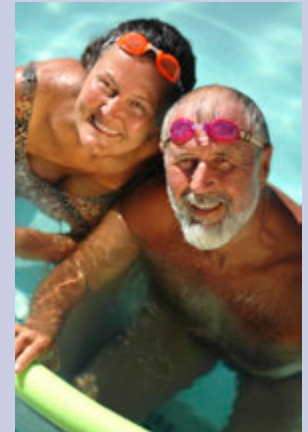
By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

One of my absolute “fave” ways to start my day is with an early morning swim over at our neighborhood outdoor pool. Though it can be a bit tough to climb into the water at that early hour, I get out 30 minutes later feeling limber and happy, with a zen-like relaxed attitude that lasts for hours. Among your countless options for exercise, you might want to make a point of including swimming in your fitness routine. Recent research suggests that a habit of swimming regularly might improve your longevity more than other popular fitness activities like walking and running.

Steven Blair is a scientist who has been at the forefront of exercise research for decades; he has also been a committed jogger. He and his colleagues analyzed the health records and physical activity patterns of 40,000 men from 1971 to 2003. During these decades almost 40 percent of men did no regular exercise, others walked or ran as a routine, and still others swam regularly. After adjusting for cardiovascular risk factors and age, the researchers found that the regular swimmers tended to live the longest. It came as no surprise to anyone that the swimmers far outlived the couch potatoes; but what really shocked Blair was the finding that swimmers also were 49 percent less likely to die during the study compared to the runners or walkers. Keep in mind this was only an observational study, so it doesn’t prove that swimmers live longer than walkers and runners. Still, there are plenty of reasons to consider heading to the pool regularly, including:

- Low injury rates, due in part to low impact to musculoskeletal system.
- Full body training for strength, flexibility, and aerobic fitness.
- Rhythmic breathing, which is good for lungs and induces a meditation-like state.
- Excellent exercise for building and maintaining muscle mass.

Swimming, water aerobics or water-walking, are soothing activities that are great for body and soul. Even people who can’t walk or run on land can still “lap up” all the benefits of exercise by hitting the pool. For thousands of years a variety of religions have included rituals involving immersion in water as a gateway to immortality. Indeed, this latest study suggests that one of the best ways to discover the fountain of youth may be to swim in it.



15 Steps to Banish Belly Fat (no crunches required!)

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

There aren't many things that will do more to improve your health, or your sex appeal, than getting rid of the spare tire around your midsection.

Excess belly fat, especially the kind that accumulates in and around the abdominal organs such as the liver and intestines, churns out stress hormones and inflammatory chemicals. So shedding those extra inches around your waistline is not just a vanity issue: your future health and vitality are at stake. Here are 15 steps that will help to melt the excess belly fat off your waistline so that you can show off your sexy abs again.



1. Do interval training. Go hard for 30 to 45 seconds and then ease off for a minute or two while you recover at a slower pace. Try to do at least eight intervals total per training session.
2. Build more muscle through strength training; ideally you will need to do three or four weight lifting sessions per week.
3. Every day you need to accumulate at least 30, and up to 90 minutes of moderate or hard exercise. What fits into your busy schedule better? An hour of exercise every day or being disabled or dead 24 hours a day?
4. Eat protein with each of your meals. Also, try to eat a high quality protein like whey protein or egg whites within two hours before or after exercise.
5. Pick two colors with each meal--two servings or more of brightly colored veggies or fruits three times per day.
6. Get in the habit of having a glass of low-sodium V-8 juice at

- breakfast. This is a staple around the O'Keefe household. Just eight ounces of low-sodium V-8 is a quick and easy way to get credit for two servings of vegetables. A recent study showed that drinking at least one glass of low-sodium vegetable juice daily can help overweight people with pre-diabetes lose excess weight.
7. Never eat until you are overfull. Eat only until you aren't hungry anymore. Control your serving sizes.
 8. Drink at least three cups of green tea per day, or take a green tea supplement. The antioxidants in tea seem to help burn off excess belly fat.
 9. If you are going to cheat and eat a decadent dessert, French fries, chips, cake etc: follow Joan's three-bite rule. Pick a treat but you get only three bites. By the way, you only get to use the three-bite rule one time per day, max.
 10. Markedly cut back on starches and sugars. And eliminate essentially all white foods like white flour, white rice, potatoes, bagels and doughnuts.
 11. Drink only water (six to eight glasses per day), coffee, tea, and skim milk. No soda pop

- (even diet pop), no artificial sweeteners, no fruit juices. No caffeine after noon.
12. Sleep 7.5 to 8.5 hours per night. This is a critical component of a belly-burning program. Sleep deprivation cranks up your stress hormones that make you crave junk food and then immediately deposits all those calories as fat around your waist.
 13. Try to eat more healthy fats like fish oil and monounsaturated fats. Take three fish oil capsules per day, and try to eat a handful of nuts per day. Use extra virgin olive oil for your salad dressing and cooking oil uses.
 14. Take 2,000 IU of Vitamin D3 per day. (Talk to your doctor to see if you need more). Decreased belly fat is just one of a host of important health benefits you will notice when you bring your deficient Vitamin D levels back into the normal range.
 15. Keep your alcohol intake modest, and drink mostly red wine. Why do you think it's called a "beer-belly?" One drink per day will reduce abdominal fat, but anything more than two drinks daily accumulates in and around your belly.

Are Viagra, Levitra or Cialis Safe for Your Heart?

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D.

This is one of the more common questions I get from my male patients. Or sometimes it's the significant other who is worried that one of these drugs for erectile dysfunction (ED) might stress their partner's heart. In fact, for most people these ED drugs are very safe and highly effective.

Sex is designed by nature to be one of life's most exquisite pleasures. Physical intimacy bonds us to our partner like nothing else, and helps to cement and maintain a close, personal and loving connection. Having an intimate long-term relationship is one of the most important predictors of someone who will stay healthy and happy despite the stresses and strains that life inevitably throws at us along our journey. So by helping to improve sexual ability in men, these ED drugs can be helpful to their heart health and overall well-being.



A Curious Side Effect. . .

These drugs were discovered by accident about 20 years ago when scientists were looking for a drug to treat heart disease. This particular drug (eventually named Viagra) turned out to dilate blood vessels particularly well in the penis. As they say, the rest is history, and this drug alone has grown into a billion-dollar-per-year blockbuster.

The take-home message is that these drugs dilate blood vessels which in general is good for your heart. Check in with your physician before starting one of the drugs just to be sure. And be careful not to use nitroglycerin-type medicines in combination with Viagra, Levitra, or Cialis, because they might lower your blood pressure too much.

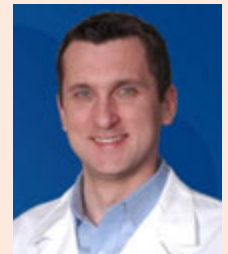
These erectile dysfunction medicines are relatively expensive, at about \$14 per pill. But as the wife of one of my patients put it, "It's about the same as what we would pay to go see a movie, and this is usually much better entertainment."

*"Love doesn't make the world go round.
Love is what makes the ride worthwhile."
Franklin Jones*

New Cardiologists Join Practice

Two new cardiologists have recently joined Cardiovascular Consultants. They are Dimitri Baklanov, M.D., and Adnan Chhatriwalla, M.D.

Dr. Baklanov is practicing clinical cardiology and interventional cardiology primarily at the group's Saint Luke's South office.



He came to the practice from Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. He performed his fellowship in interventional cardiology at Jewish Hospital, University of Louisville School of Medicine. He is board certified in cardiovascular diseases, interventional cardiology and internal medicine. ❤️

Dr. Chhatriwalla is practicing at the group's Saint Luke's East office in Lee's Summit. Most recently, he was at the Cleveland Clinic, where

he completed fellowships in cardiovascular medicine and interventional cardiology.



He is board certified in cardiovascular diseases and internal medicine.

To schedule an appointment with either physician, please call 816-931-1883. ❤️



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James H. O'Keefe, Jr., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

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*Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009, 6 to 8:30 p.m.
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