



# HEART

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Your Newsletter from Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants

Spring 2011

## Healthy Pleasures

### *Feel Good without the Guilt!*

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

**M**ark Twain was dead wrong when he quipped: "The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not." Turns out that staying healthy isn't all about deprivation; many of life's most exquisite pleasures are among the best things for your well-being and longevity. So you can stop feeling guilty about these habits—they will make your life not just more pleasant, but also longer and healthier.

### Sleep: Get Your ZZZZZs

No controversy here—sleep might feel like an indulgent luxury, but seven to eight hours of deep restorative sleep on a nightly basis is one of the most important habits you can cultivate to ensure a long and vigorous life. Sleep costs nothing, has zero drawbacks, and besides feeling wonderfully rejuvenating, also boosts your energy, improves your memory and creativity, strengthens the immune system, improves your mood, and helps you to stay lean and fit.



On the other hand, sleep deprivation causes high blood pressure, high glucose and excess belly fat, not to mention a cranky and irritable disposition. A recent study of 500,000 people showed that those who routinely slept less than six hours nightly had a substantially increased risk for heart attack, stroke and diabetes. By the way, it's normal to sleep for three or four hours deeply for the first half of the night, and then awaken for a period of time before you fall back to sleep for the second half of your night's slumber. Don't fret over this interlude; just lie quietly in your comfortable bed and let your mind wander. And rather than counting sheep, count your blessings.

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## How to Save Your Life for 11 Cents a Day!

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

**J**ulia is thrilled that her insurance company will send her a 90-day supply of simvastatin for just \$40. What she doesn't know is that she could take that same prescription down to her local HyVee Pharmacy and get a 90-day supply for just \$10. Indeed, for many of the medicines we most commonly prescribe, you are better off pretending that you don't have prescription coverage from your insurance company at all, and instead just purchasing a 30 or 90-day supply and paying for it out-of-pocket, assuming you do your homework and find a pharmacy that sells generics at deeply discounted prices.

There is a silver lining behind the storm clouds that are threatening to make modern medical care unaffordable; powerful market forces are driving the prices of many first-rate medications to remarkably inexpensive levels. Each year more and more of the very best drugs for improving cardiovascular health, and extending your longevity, are becoming available as inexpensive generics, often for as little as \$4 a month or \$10 for a 90-day supply. Currently, generic drugs account for about 70 percent of all prescriptions written by me, and by U.S. physicians as a whole. This is expected to grow to more than 80 percent over the next three years.

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## Healthy Pleasures *Continued from page 1*

If you're having trouble sleeping, rather than resorting to prescription medications, which can be habit-forming and cause fatigue the next day, instead try taking aspirin, 81 mg, and/or melatonin, 3 mg, 15 to 30 minutes before bedtime. These are safe, effective and non-habit forming over-the-counter sleep aids.

Napping is another treat that turns out to be good for your heart and your attitude, so don't feel guilty about a little mid-day snooze (but try to limit it to not more than about 30 minutes).

### Play: Have Fun Getting Physical

We don't stop playing because we get old; we get old because we stop playing. Physical activity is super good for you; problem is, we tend to think of exercise as an unpleasant chore—a "workout" doesn't connote fun. On the other hand, the more you can move your body with joy, or enthusiasm, or passion, the more vigorous and healthy, not to mention happy and youthful, you will be. So make it a point to inject some physical play into each day.

Hands down, your best choice for combining exercise and pleasure is sexual activity. Having sexual relations with your spouse or significant other releases powerful feel-good hormones like oxytocin and endorphins. These not only make you happy, but they also strengthen psychological bonds and promote intimacy. Feeling emotionally connected on an intimate level to another person provides powerful benefits to your mental and physical health.



Even just a kiss can make us feel more connected; a deep and soulful kiss is like saying, "I love you" without words. The experts say that even if you have been together a long time, kissing each other like you mean it, is important. Marilyn Anderson, author of *Never Kiss a Frog*, says, "Put your whole body into the kiss. Without words, your lips should say, 'Baby, there's more where that came from!'" Getting frisky on a regular basis has been shown to improve

immunity and is linked to better cardiovascular health. Of course sexual activity in the wrong settings can cause all sorts of serious health problems and social predicaments so it is important to practice safe sex.

Dancing is another great option to move just for the fun of it. Dance classes, dancing with your partner, or even dancing alone with your iPod or whenever the spirit moves you (like I catch myself doing more these days), are fun and easy ways to get fit and happy without even trying.

When you were a kid you probably loved to play active games, often outside, not because it was good for you, but because fun is, well...fun. So find sports you can do with your friends and make it a priority to play as often as possible. Playing outdoors, even just walking with friends, is especially great for your health and well-being.



## Vacation: A Luxury You Can't Afford to Do Without

Chronic stress is much more than just emotional strain; accumulating evidence indicates that it's harmful to nearly all of your organs, especially your heart and brain. An alarming 75 percent of all doctor visits are, at least in part, triggered by stress.

High blood pressure, irregular heart rates, heart attacks, headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, sleep disorders, gum disease, and even sudden cardiac arrest are among the countless health problems that are linked to emotional stress. Even obesity has been shown to occur more often in employees who report being stressed at work than in those who do not feel job-related strain. Cortisol, a stress hormone, may be one of the culprits; it stimulates cravings for high-carb junk food and predisposes to increased deposits of belly fat. Too much stress also tends to make us lethargic and depressed, and thus more likely to spend our free time sprawled out on a couch staring mindlessly at a television, for instance.

Although regular vacations may seem like an unnecessary extravagance, the scientific evidence suggests that they not only make us happier, but also reduce risks for illness, and may even improve life expectancy. One study of 12,000 men at high risk for heart disease, found that compared to those who didn't vacation regularly, those who took vacations at least once

yearly were 32 percent less likely to die from all causes, and 39 percent less likely to die from cardiovascular disease. “Vacays,” as my son Jimmy calls them, are great for rejuvenating us and recharging our enthusiasm. Especially during stressful times it is important to take a break from work and get away with loved ones or friends to a relaxing and fun spot. Personally, I find that even just making plans for a vacation, and anticipating a fun and adventurous trip, makes me feel enthused and happy. Ideally you should take several vacations throughout the year so you always have something to be looking forward to.

Sure, kick back and get plenty of rest, but also include vigorous exercise in your vacations plans. Physical activity stimulates brain chemicals that make us happy, energized and relaxed. Fit is the new fun, and daily exercise is a sure-fire strategy to make you feel more attractive, self-confident, joyful, smarter and more stress-proof.

## Spend Time with Your Friends

Over the past decade a whole new field of science has emerged focusing on the benefits of strong social ties and a positive attitude. Friendships are good for your health, especially if you spend time with well-adjusted, generally happy people who have your best interests in mind. But attitudes are contagious; so try to gravitate to people who have a positive outlook on life. An important study confirmed that having a sunny outlook and seeing the glass as half-full may help you live a longer and healthier life. This study, published in February 2011 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, evaluated the psychological and physical health of nearly 3,000 heart

patients and found that those with an optimistic outlook were about 30 percent more likely to be alive after 15 years than their pessimistic counterparts. In essence, optimism is as powerful as the best drugs we have for improving the long-term health and survival of cardiac patients. So try to look at the bright side.

Speaking of attitudes that promote well-being and longevity, gratitude confers powerful benefits to our mental and physical health. Individuals who feel grateful report more energy and optimism, better relationships and happier moods, with lower risks for alcoholism and depression. A grateful heart is linked with higher wages, better sleep and fitness, and stronger immunity. I spoke with a friend whose wife is dying of cancer, and as distraught as he was, he said, “Sometimes when I am alone, I just want to scream and cry about how unfair this is, but then I remind myself just to be grateful that such a warm and loving person came into in my life, even if it wasn’t for long enough time.” I was inspired by his courage and strength and it reminded me to not take all my blessings for granted.

## Enjoy Some High-Fat Foods

Although various “experts” have been scolding us for decades about eating fatty foods, they were wrong. Even today it is common to hear advice to follow a low-fat diet. The truth is that some high-fat foods are among the healthiest things you can eat. Plus full-fat foods taste better, and help to keep you full longer. Avocados, extra-virgin olive oil, naturally oily fish like salmon and sea bass, and nuts are all high in fat—the healthy kinds. Unlike the nasty saturated fats present in greasy hamburger and other fatty meats, as well as in high-fat dairy, the good



fats will lower risk of heart attack and stroke, and are good for your brain and joints. Some diets, including the Flat Belly Diet, focus on eating a modest amount of foods containing healthy fat with each meal. You should try to eat about 30 percent of your daily calories from healthy fats. By the way, dark chocolate can be healthy if it is very high (at least 65 percent) in cocoa and cocoa solids, but even then you should limit it to about six to 10 grams per day, which is one Hershey’s Kiss, for example.

## Massage Therapy

Getting a rubdown not only feels good, it also reduces stress and lowers blood pressure. People who are touched regularly, especially in a gentle and affectionate manner, tend to be healthier and happier. Human touch can confer powerful healing and soothing effects on a person, particularly when they are feeling stressed. If you don’t have the time or the money to spend at the spa, consider getting in the habit of using healing touch therapy with your significant other. Studies show that women, after being massaged at least two times weekly by their partners, reported feeling less depression, anxiety, and anger; not surprisingly, their partners reported better moods too.

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## The Journey to Success

**J**ohn Wooden was one of the greatest college basketball coaches of all time. He won 10 NCAA National Championships in the span of 12 years. Revered as a coach and beloved by his players, Wooden was mentally sharp and physically active his entire life until he died at age 99 in May of 2010. Below are a few of our favorite quotes from “Coach.”

- ♥ “Make everyday your masterpiece.”
- ♥ “Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.”
- ♥ “Happiness begins where selfishness ends.”
- ♥ “There’s no great fun, satisfaction or joy derived from doing something that’s easy.”
- ♥ “Young people need models, not critics.”
- ♥ “Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”
- ♥ “The journey is better than the end.”

## Healthy Pleasures *Continued from page 3*

### Your Morning Buzz: Coffee and Tea

No morning regrets—coffee and tea (hold the cream and sugar) are among the healthiest beverages you can drink. Both coffee and tea are loaded with disease-fighting, anti-aging anti-oxidants and they are essentially calorie free. Drinking four cups of coffee per day reduces risk of diabetes, and neuro-degenerative diseases including Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. Tea, especially green tea, is turning out to be an amazingly beneficial drink for preventing everything from high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, to reducing risks for brain diseases and some cancers. They rev up your metabolism and help you to exercise harder and longer. Be careful about getting too much caffeine, and avoid caffeinated versions of coffee or tea after about mid-afternoon.



### Sun Bathing

As a kid growing up near the Canadian border, I remember feeling a euphoric “natural high” when the warming rays of sun would make their reappearance in mid-March. At the end of a long, cold and dark winter I would go out in my shorts and T-shirt, even when the temperatures were still in the 40s, look up at the sun, close my eyes and bask in the wonderful goodness of those golden rays. It was like scratching an intense itch. In fact this need for the sun is a powerful instinct that compels us to soak up the sunlight when it’s available to ensure that we get our vitamin D levels back into

the normal healthy ranges. Sunlight in the non-winter months will stimulate your skin to produce large amounts of vitamin D, which is perhaps the most important vitamin of all. Keeping your vitamin D levels up may help to prevent cancers, heart disease, infections, and diabetes, to name just a few of its many health benefits. To be sure, too much sun can cause premature aging of the skin and skin cancers, so you have to be very modest about unprotected sun exposure—10 to 20 minutes daily, after which you should put on sunscreen. Make sure to take a daily supplement of vitamin D also; most people need at least 2,000 I.U. per day.

### A Glass of Wine with Dinner

Raise a glass to toast the health benefits of your nightly wine habit, as long as you keep it to one if you are a woman and up to two per day for a man. Alcohol in small daily quantities reduces heart disease and diabetes as well as exercise or the best of our medications. The devil is in the dosing—at quantities greater than two drinks per day, the risks for a host of adverse health effects rise in proportion to the amount of alcohol consumed. In fact, excess alcohol is the number three leading cause of premature death. But if you can be consistent and disciplined about drinking just one or two per day, ideally a dry red wine, it can be a habit that brings you health and happiness. It’s not for nothing that it’s called “Happy Hour;” just make sure that you don’t turn it into a heavy-drinking “Unhappy Evening.”

# Home Work: It's Your Blood Pressure—Get To Know It

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

**N**ine out of 10 Americans develop high blood pressure sooner or later, so it is crucial that you keep track of this



easily obtainable vital sign. The most important blood pressure reading is not the one done in your doctor's office, or your local drug store, but rather your average blood pressure throughout your day-to-day life. In that regard, ideally you should keep a blood pressure monitor in your house and keep track of your blood pressure from time to time.

If you have high blood pressure and are having difficulties controlling it, you may need to check it more than once a day. It's very useful to keep a log of your blood pressures, and bring this into your doctor when you show up for your follow-up visits. I find it extremely helpful to have my patients bring in an extensive log of their blood pressures obtained at different times and places over several weeks. Don't check your blood pressure only when you are feeling relaxed and happy, but also at times when you're feeling stressed, sleep deprived, angry, tired, etc. A list of blood pressures is invaluable when your physician and you are deciding whether your blood pressure control is adequate.

One of the best manufacturers of home monitors is Omron®; these are reliable machines that automatically inflate and deflate and record precise and reproducible measurements of blood pressure

and heart rate. I would suggest that you purchase one of their less expensive models (3 series or 5 series). The higher end models have more bells and

whistles, but these are generally unnecessary. Use only an upper arm cuff, the wrist cuffs are less accurate.

When taking your blood pressure, you should be seated and relaxed with your arm resting comfortably on a table at approximately the level of your heart (or your left breast). Both feet should be flat on the floor. Check your blood pressure two to three times, about a minute or two apart.

Generally, we recommend that you take the middle reading of the three as the most accurate, or better yet, the average of the three. Ideal blood pressure is 100-130/60-85. Occasionally, your readings will be outside this ideal range, and that's okay—blood pressure is highly variable depending on what you are doing and how you are feeling at the moment, so it will sometimes be higher and at other times lower. The important thing is that most of your blood pressure readings are in the ideal range. We can nearly always achieve this by working with you on your diet and lifestyle and using one or more medications as necessary. Your blood pressure is perhaps your most important "vital sign," so don't take it for granted. Keeping your blood pressure in the ideal range is one of the most important things you can do to safeguard your long-term health.

## Cardiovascular Risks of Ibuprofen and Naproxen

If you are like most Americans, you probably take one of the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen or naproxen for pain from time-to-time, or maybe even on daily basis. You should know, however, that an authoritative new study found surprisingly large increases in cardiovascular risks associated with NSAIDs. Some of these drugs are prescription, like Celebrex, while most of them are over-the-counter like ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn).

This large meta-analysis, published online Jan. 11, 2011 in the *British Medical Journal*, found that regular NSAID use increased risks (by some estimates as much as two-fold) of heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular death.

Millions of Americans use NSAIDs frequently, usually for backaches, headaches, and chronic pain in their bones and muscles. In the U.S., about five percent of all doctor visits are for prescriptions of anti-inflammatory medicines like NSAIDs, making them among the most commonly prescribed.

If you have heart disease or risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes, you should be especially careful to avoid these medicines, and when you have to use them, you should take the lowest possible dose for the shortest period of time. Of all the NSAIDs, naproxen appears to be the safest for the heart. However, naproxen, like all NSAIDs, can be especially hard on the stomach and intestines, predisposing to bleeding. So take care to never take NSAIDs on an empty stomach.

# Quench Your Thirst with Goodness

By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

Over the past 25 years, the average American has markedly increased the number of calories he or she drinks each day. During this same time period, the rates of obesity and diabetes have risen three- to four-fold, and experts believe that increased intake of high-calorie beverages is one of the major culprits making us fat. In fact today, beverages account for 21 percent of the total caloric intake. According to the “Beverage Guidance Panel,” the healthiest type of diet relies on natural, whole foods and not fluids to provide the vast majority of calories and nutrition.

Women need at least 72 ounces (nine cups) of fluid per day and men need approximately 100 ounces (12.5 cups) of fluid. If you are exercising vigorously, you will need even more. This need can be met almost entirely with water, although many people prefer to drink other forms of beverages. For the most part, we should be drinking zero-calorie beverages. Liquid calories should account for no more than 10 percent of your total daily caloric intake.

For example, if you are consuming a typical 2,000-calorie diet, you should make sure that not more than 200 of those calories are consumed in the form of beverages. Many Americans consume a large amount of sweetened beverages such as soda, which contain high-fructose corn syrup. Downing one 64-ounce DOUBLE BIG GULP from Quik-Trip will immediately dump 900 inflammation-causing calories into your system.

A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that

among almost 80,000 women, the incidence of gout (a very painful form of inflammatory arthritis) was closely related to intake of sugar-sweetened sodas. Women who drank one serving per day had a 74 percent higher risk of developing gout than those who consumed less than one serving per month. The risk for gout was two and one-half fold higher for women drinking two or more servings per day of sweetened soft drinks.

Surprisingly, even orange juice increased risk of gout as much as the sweetened sodas. The likely culprit in



the sweetened drinks was high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). This very sweet but toxic substance is the darling of the processed food industry. HFCS increases triglyceride levels, causes inflammation, and has been linked to diabetes and heart disease. Even artificially sweetened sodas are corrosive to your health; a habit of one or more diet sodas daily has been linked to a 50 percent higher risk of stroke, heart attack and cardiovascular death over the course of a decade among the 2,500 people in the NOMAS (North Manhattan) Study.

## Drink Up!

So, what you should be drinking? The following is a list of healthy beverages. Anything not on this list, probably should be avoided.

1. Water
2. Sparkling water (try adding slice of lemon or lime to the beverage)
3. Green Tea (or any unsweetened tea)
4. Coffee (black or with skim milk)
5. Skim or one percent milk
6. Almond or soy milk (with added calcium)
7. Low-sodium tomato juice or vegetable juice, such as low-sodium V-8 (the ONLY kind of juice you should be drinking)
8. Alcohol-containing beverages (unsweetened). (These should be consumed only in light-to-moderate amounts, or they should be avoided altogether. One glass of red wine before or during the evening meal is ideal, although other drinks are acceptable as long as you keep it to just one, never more than two a day. One drink consists of 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits – whiskey, vodka, etc., 12 ounces of beer, or 5.5 ounces of wine.)

## How to Save Your Life for 11 Cents a Day! *Continued from page 1*

The skyrocketing popularity of generic drugs is due to the fact that they usually provide the same benefits as the original brand-name medicines at a fraction of the price. This is causing serious financial pain for the big pharmaceutical corporations when sales of their billion dollar blockbuster drugs vanish almost overnight when cheap generic copycats become available. Between 1996 and 2006, the percent of income spent on prescription drugs rose from 10 percent to 18 percent for the average American.

The biggest blockbuster drug of all time, Lipitor (atorvastatin), is scheduled to be going off patent in about six months (November 2011). The cost of this life-saving drug will plummet from \$100 or \$150 a month to just a fraction of this. In fact, even today if you have private insurance (but not Medicare or Medicaid), you may already be able to get Lipitor for \$4 a month if you go to the web site: [onlylipitor.com](http://onlylipitor.com) and download a coupon that you can redeem when you fill your Lipitor prescription.

When it comes to prescription drugs, you don't necessarily get what you pay for. Even inexpensive generics have to pass muster with the FDA, and prove that they provide as much active medication as the name-brand drug. Typically a drug will have 11 to 12 years of exclusive sales before its patent expires. When a brand-name drug loses its patent protection, generic drug companies are free to manufacture and market a duplicate of the drug. By FDA standards a generic drug must be bioequivalent, meaning that after it is swallowed, it will reliably produce blood levels similar to those produced by the brand-name drug. Sure, the generic drug may contain some different inactive ingredients, and hence the pill may be of a different size, color,

taste, etc. compared to the brand-name version—but by law the active ingredients must be the same.

In my opinion, the most exceptional value in health care today is the availability of many life-saving drugs at astoundingly low prices. Some of the very best of these life-saving medicines that cost next-to-nothing, include: carvedilol (a beta blocker for high blood pressure, heart failure and coronary artery disease); simvastatin (a statin drug for lowering cholesterol); metformin (the best choice to treat early diabetes or pre-diabetes); amlodipine and diltiazem (for high blood pressure); indapamide and chlorthalidone (the best drugs diuretic/fluid pills for high blood pressure);



lisinopril (the best ACE inhibitor for high blood pressure); and losartan (the only generic ARB for high blood pressure). Ask your doctor if one or more of these medicines might be appropriate substitutions for some of your current name-brand drugs. Prices listed below are the best we could find here in the Kansas City metro area during a recent telephone survey we performed in February 2011.

### Generic Price Comparisons

Drug Name/ Dose	HyVee 30 /90 day	Costco 30 /90 day	Target 30 /90 day	Wal-Mart 30 /90 day
Amlodipine 5 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$10 / \$13*	\$22 /\$66	\$15 /\$44
Carvedilol 12.5 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$6 /\$7 *	\$4 /\$10	\$4 /\$10
Indapamide 1.25 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$6 /\$11*	\$4 /\$10	\$4 /\$10
Lisinopril 20 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$8 /\$11*	\$4 /\$10	\$4 /\$10
Metformin 1000 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$6 /\$7 *	\$4 /\$10	\$4 /\$10
Simvastatin 40 mg	\$4 /\$10	\$6 /\$11*	\$4 /\$10**	\$4 /\$10

\* Costco Pharmacy dispenses 100-day supply instead of 90-day

\*\* You will need to ask about HyVee Pricing – to get Target to match HyVee prices

Note: CVS and Walgreen's Pharmacies were not listed above due to their prescription saving programs which require a yearly individual membership fee of \$15/\$20 respectively.

# The Fiber of Your Life

By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

I am a clinical cardiologist with a zeal for helping people regain and/or maintain their cardiovascular health and overall vigor; though honestly, I’ve never had much interest in doing animal studies. But over the past few months I unwittingly subjected my three dogs to a dietary experiment that I found enlightening. Coco is a little mutt whose body had come to resemble an overstuffed sausage covered with curly hair. Even Brandon and Brady, my high-energy canine running partners, had put on a few stubborn pounds around their midsection, which made them look older and act less energetic.

So I found a new dog food that promises to get overweight dogs back to a “healthy weight.” It didn’t take me long to figure out what the secret ingredient of this weight loss dog food was: fiber, and lots of it. I am in charge of ‘poop patrol’ out in the back yard where the dogs run around, and immediately after switching to this new dog food I noticed that the amount of waste the dogs were

putting out approximately doubled. And sure enough, over the next few months Brandon and Brady got their youthful waistlines back, and even Coco, though not quite fit yet, was at least looking less obese.

The latest and best science indicates that eating a high-fiber diet is one of the most important steps you can take for improving your cardiovascular health and longevity. A recently published study shows that a high intake of plant fiber each day is strongly linked to longevity. These researchers found that increased intake of plant fiber was associated with a lower risk of dying over a nine-year period compared to people who ate smaller quantities of fiber. Plant fiber, which is present in many foods including vegetables, fruits, berries, beans, nuts, and whole grains, helps the bowels move food efficiently through the digestive tract. A high-fiber diet helps prevent constipation, reduces blood levels of cholesterol and sugar, and may even lower risks of heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. This new study from the National Institutes of Health involved about 390,000 adults and found that a diet rich in indigestible fiber from whole plant foods predicted better life expectancy. The individuals who were in the top one-fifth with respect to the quantity of fiber consumed each day were 22 percent less likely to die compared to people who were in the lowest one-fifth for daily fiber intake. The high-fiber intake was also associated with significant reductions in the risks of death from cardiovascular disease, infections, lung diseases, and some cancers. To

get the impressive benefits noted in this study, women should eat at least 25 to 30 grams of fiber daily and men need to eat 35 or more grams of fiber daily. Tellingly, our ancient human ancestors living in the wild consumed at least 40 grams of fiber daily, so a high-fiber diet is what nature meant for us to eat.

## Prebiotics and Probiotics

<u>Age / Sex</u>	<u>Fiber Intake per Day</u>
Children	25 grams
Adult Women	25 – 30 grams
Adult Men	35 – 40 grams

Your body is made up of about 400 trillion cells working together in an incomprehensively complex, and intelligently choreographed dance. Still more astounding is the fact that we have at least two times that many cells within us or attached to us that are not our own cells, but that are just strangers hitchhiking along for the ride. A study in the February 24, 2011 issue of the ***New England Journal of Medicine*** reported that children who grew up in the country and were exposed to more soil and a variety of microbes in their everyday environment had 50 to 75 percent lower rates of asthma and allergies as adults compared to city kids who didn’t get exposed to dirt and nature. This is termed the hygiene theory – or the “eat dirt hypothesis,” which reasons that natural germs help to strengthen the child’s immune system and thus offer protection even as an adult against asthma and allergies.

Many bacteria, for instance lactobacillus and bifidobacterium, are friendly microbes that set up



camp in our gut, and help us to digest food, prevent dangerous infections and may be beneficial for the health of our lungs and heart.

These normal healthy gut bacteria are called “probiotics” and they have long been known to promote digestive health and to support a strong and active immune system. Some recent research suggests that probiotics can also help to lower cholesterol modestly and prevent lung infections.

Prebiotics is a term used for natural healthy plant fibers that are largely indigestible. These fibers help to provide an ideal environment in which the healthy bacteria can thrive. The combination of prebiotics (fiber) and probiotics (healthy bacteria) in your daily diet can bring several possible health benefits including: fewer symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (such as cramping, diarrhea, and constipation), lower risks for stomach ulcers and ulcerative colitis, reduced number and severity of upper respiratory infections, lower cholesterol levels, and lower rates of obesity.

## How to Re-populate Your Gut with Healthy Bacteria

Eat yogurt, preferably plain and unsweetened, low-fat or non-fat yogurt that contains “live cultures.” Greek yogurt has the highest level of these probiotics. You should have at least two to three servings per week. Add unsalted raw nuts like walnuts, almonds, or pecans and fresh or frozen berries, like wild blueberries or strawberries. You will have an ideal breakfast for your gastrointestinal tract, your waistline, and your heart. If you don't like

yogurt, you can take a probiotic supplement.

## Getting the Fiber You Need

Try to get at least four cups of produce per day. This should include non-fattening vegetables (essentially anything except potatoes and corn) and fresh fruit. Consider adding a soluble fiber supplement (like Metamucil) to your routine if you are trying to lose excess weight or lower your cholesterol. We generally recommend one heaping teaspoon of Metamucil (the artificially sweetened version with no added sugar), dissolved in 16 ounces of water and guzzled down quickly. If you let it sit for more than a minute or two after mixing the powder into the water, it turns into an unpleasant, thick gel that is hard to drink. Ideally, the soluble fiber (such as Metamucil) with water should be consumed in the mid to late afternoon or before dinner.

Nuts are another good source of fiber. Studies show that eating nuts five or more times per week correlates with a 30 to 50 percent reduction in the risk of heart attack. Also, nuts like almonds are rich in many healthful nutrients like vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, and healthy fats. Unless you are very active and burning a lot of calories daily, keep your nut intake to about one handful per day.



## The Power of Dietary Anti-oxidants

By now you are probably tired of hearing how you need to eat more vegetables and fruits, but if you want to rejuvenate your life, improve your health, and burn off that belly fat, make a point of eating lots of natural colors. Just one daily serving of green leafy vegetables such as spinach may lower your risk of diabetes by 14 percent. And a diet high in antioxidants from sources such as blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, green tea, coffee, dark chocolate, and red wine can improve the function of your blood vessels by as much as 50 percent. That means healthier, less inflamed arteries, which revitalizes everything from your brain and heart to your sexual function. Blueberries, especially wild blueberries, are a rich source of potent anti-oxidants called anthocyanins (red or blue pigments). Studies indicate that eating blueberries on a regular basis can lower blood pressure and maintain sharp brain function.

# Your Best Years Are Ahead of You

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

**M**y grandmother Alice used to say, "it's a great life if you don't weaken." She lived on the second floor of an apartment building without an elevator, never owned a car, walked everywhere, and even carried her groceries home from the neighborhood market in her little hometown of Crookston, Minn. Indeed, Alice was a strong woman emotionally and physically, and she often said that she had "85 good years."

The end of her high-quality life came shortly after she decided she could no longer climb up and down the long, steep staircase to her apartment. Shortly thereafter, Alice moved into a retirement facility where she learned that when she quit doing the hard things, the easy things in her life became hard. She settled into a wheelchair, where she spent most of the last eight years of her life.

Today, the fastest growing segment of the population is over age 85. Studies indicate that, contrary to popular belief, most people tend to get happier as the years go by beyond middle age. Satisfaction and happiness usually are very high for people in their 20s, and then we tend to become less happy until about age 45, when we start to get happier again, and within about a decade most people are as happy or happier than they were in their 20s. The two main threats to your continued happiness and well being during the second half of your life are social isolation and the loss of your good health. But beware, both of these threats are very real and so you need to be proactive about avoiding them. For example, although the age-adjusted death



rate from cardiovascular disease has fallen by two-thirds over the past 25 years, if you are age 50 or older without a history of heart trouble and you are a man, you still have about a 50 percent chance of developing heart disease during your lifetime, and the risk for a woman is about 40 percent. Also at age 50 your chance of developing diabetes during the duration of your lifetime is 33 percent for men and 40 percent for women.

Most of us are more concerned with the quality of our life rather than the sheer quantity of years we are alive. The latest research shows that being physically active from middle age on is the single best way not only to survive into old age, but also to thrive with vigor and joy. In November 2010 at the American Heart Association meeting, Dr. Jarett Berry presented data showing if you are physically active in mid-life, you double your chances of surviving to 85. Or stated in another way, if you are not fit in your 50s, your projected lifespan is almost a decade shorter than if you are fit in mid-life. More importantly, if you want to do more than just exist, daily exercise will preserve your physical vitality, mental sharpness and overall quality of life more than anything else you can do. In this study of 1,765 men

and women, being physically fit outperformed all other factors, even not smoking and having low blood pressure, as the best predictor of longevity.

Many Americans have fallen into the habit of taking the "path of least resistance," preferring to take a pill rather than getting up off the couch and get moving. This tendency to do less physical activity and become less fit each year after age 30 is a serious threat to overall health and happiness. National guidelines recommend 30 minutes or more a day of moderate activity, five days a week at least. Or if preferred, 20 minutes of high-intensity exercise five times a week. Also, try to include weight-training exercises 20 minutes a day at least two times a week. Weight lifting lowers your post-workout and day-to-day blood pressures at least as well as cardio exercise.

## Steps to Brighten Your Future and Safeguard Your Well-Being

**1** Our personal relationships and our health are our two most valuable assets in life. Without these two essentials, we have nothing. When you feel battered by storms in your life, shipwrecked, left for dead, drifting aimlessly in a vast ocean of problems, connect with the people around you like your very survival depends upon it. Because it is not an exaggeration to state that the network of personal connections you cultivate with your friends, family, co-workers and community will be the life raft that will keep you alive, safe and sound, during the tough times. Those relationships will

also keep you happy and healthy throughout your life. Women by nature are usually more adept than men at nurturing their personal relationships, which is one of the reasons they tend to outlive their male counterparts. Make it a priority to build a network of support by taking time to enjoy and appreciate the people in your life. And remember if you want to have a friend, you have to be a friend. Call, text or e-mail your parents, children and friends often. Go out of your way to be kind, considerate and interested in others around you, and consciously work at building and maintaining relationships: nothing will be more important for your happiness or health and well being in the long run.

**2** Invest your time, energy and disposable income into experiences more than material things. A new car might make you happy for a short time, but it's a fleeting happiness. If you really want to increase the joy and meaning in your life try to think of your time here on Earth as a great adventure to be shared and enjoyed with your companions. Experiences you share with your friends and family will add much more happiness and value to your life than material things you purchase.

**3** Don't eat unless you feel definite hunger. It is the mindless downing of massive amounts of junk food calories that causes most people to get fat.

**4** Inject enthusiasm and passion in everything from your work, to your relationships, to your hobbies.

**5** Take the long view. If something that is bothering you today won't matter five years from now – don't lose sleep over it. Don't take your life so seriously—it's not permanent.

**6** If you have time for no other exercise, walk every day. But the intensity of exercise makes all the difference. A Harvard University study showed that walking four miles per hour or faster (about 130 steps per minute) is necessary to prevent the gradual but steady yearly weight gain, especially around the waist, that happens to most Americans starting at about age 18. So, at the very least, you should strive each day to get out and walk two miles in 30 minutes or

less, or walk one mile in 15 minutes or less, two times during the day. Astoundingly, 40 minutes or more of vigorous aerobic exercise, at least three times weekly for a year, was recently shown to increase the size and power of the hippocampus—the part of the brain responsible for making new memories; in the same study the hippocampus shrank in size in the group not doing regular dynamic aerobic exercise.

## Words of Wisdom from the "Godfather of Fitness"

Jack LaLanne lived a remarkably vigorous life for nearly a century, and then at age 96 died quickly and painlessly from pneumonia. He was an enthusiastic visionary who was decades ahead of his time in his thinking regarding fitness and nutrition. Follow his timeless advice; it is more relevant today than ever. This is the same sort of diet and exercise program we write about in the HEART Newsletter. Exercise at least 30 minutes daily, eat lean protein, vegetables, fruit and nuts, get regular check-ups with your doctor, and try to be adaptable and proactive when crisis and disruptive change occurs.



"Forget about what you used to do. This is the moment you've been waiting for."

"Exercise is king and nutrition is queen: together, you have a kingdom."

"If man made it, don't eat it!"

As he was getting older, when asked about his sex life he joked, "My wife and I still made love almost every night: Almost on Monday, almost on Tuesday, almost on Wednesday..."

"If you want to change somebody, don't preach to him. Set an example and shut up."

"I train like I'm training for the Olympics, the way I've always trained my whole life. You see, life is a battlefield. Life is survival of the fittest."

"How many healthy people do you know? How many happy people do you know? Think about it. People work at dying, they don't work at living. My workout is my obligation to life."

"Do you know how many calories are in butter and cheese and ice cream? Would you get your dog up in the morning for a Coke and a donut? Probably millions of Americans got up this morning with a cigarette and a donut. No wonder they are sick and fouled up."

# Why the People of Denmark are the World's Happiest

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

Last September I spent about 48 hours in Copenhagen, Denmark meeting with Dr. Jorn Dyerberg, the first scientist to recognize, over 40 years ago, that it is the omega-3 oils in fish that confer their protective effects on the heart and blood vessels.

During my two-day visit we traveled everywhere on bikes as I had the pleasure of experiencing the unique charms of Copenhagen. The streets of this city, rain or shine, winter or summer, are teeming with cyclists, and fully one-third of Danes commute to and from work each day by bike.

The evening I arrived there, Jorn and Bruce (a mutual friend) met me downtown, where we enjoyed a memorable dinner. We were treated to a 10-course meal that included small servings of locally caught fish, grilled lamb, delicately prepared vegetables, and for dessert, fresh raspberries topped with a little cream. We drank hearty red wine with the meal and had strong black coffee with dessert. By the time we finished it was almost 11 p.m., and it was time for Dr. Dyerberg to leave. So we walked him over to the central train station where he unlocked his slightly rusted very average-looking bike, and rolled it onto the train. About 15 minutes later this remarkable 75-year-old gentleman rolled his bike off that train, and rode the two kilometers home, as he does every evening after work.

As it turns out, Denmark has, on average, the happiest people of any nation on the planet. They also have, next to Norway, the highest quality of life of any country, ac-



ording to the Legatum Prosperity Index. Though I must say, you wouldn't know it to walk or cycle past them on the streets. They tend to be community minded, but are a stoic people by nature. When the scientists look below the surface to discover what makes Danes so contented despite living in a cloudy, windswept Scandinavian country, with its 17 hours of darkness during winter months, they come up with some interesting findings.

The Danes are happy and prosperous because they live and work with people they trust and so they feel safe and secure. They believe that they all are equal and everyone's opinion is heard. On average, they work just 37 hours each week, and they pay about 70 percent of their earnings in taxes, but they seem to be okay with it. They take on average six weeks of vacation a year. Wealth and status are not revered in Denmark as they are in America. It appeared to me that few people were living lavish and wealthy lifestyles, but almost everybody seemed to be comfortable.

They enjoy the simple things in life, like the companionship of their family and friends, good food, and plenty of free time, enjoying outdoor activities like bicycling leisurely through the remarkably clean air and bustling, organized streets of Copenhagen. According to one Dane, "A rich person is not necessarily one with a lot of money, but rather the person who has a lot to be grateful for. The more people and things for which you develop a fondness, the richer your life will be."

They cultivate the art of living, and enjoy music, literature, food, and conversation and have cozy comfortable homes. They often belong to groups, clubs, associations, etc., and frequently volunteer. They tend to be fit and vigorous and enjoy being active out in nature. I came away from my short stay in Denmark thinking that we Americans could learn a thing or two from the Danes. Not that being happy is everything, but it does make life more meaningful, not to mention more fun.

# Floss for Your Heart!

By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

**W**hen I was a 22-year-old medical student, I began to notice occasionally, that within a few hours of eating candy or a donut, sometimes I would feel pain, redness, swelling, and maybe a bit of bleeding from a spot or two on my gums. An instinct told me that this was not to be ignored. I just knew somehow that the condition of my gums and teeth was not just an issue of vanity, but also a crucially important indicator about my overall state of health.

So ever since then I have followed a strict routine of flossing twice daily, and brushing about two or three times daily, and this helps a great deal. Yet despite my diligent oral hygiene, I still noticed that my gums were very sensitive to what I ate. When I consumed things like French fries, burgers, bagels, cheese-cake, white rice, Coke, or almost any other high-calorie, processed food that is easily digestible, I could feel the beginnings of inflammation in my gums within an hour or two. And by paying attention to these subtle clues, and modifying what I ate and drank, I figured out exactly what the ideal diet was for preventing chronic inflammation. And this as it turns out, is an essential step not just for my gums, but for achieving and maintaining optimal health and vitality for my whole body.

The accumulating science has confirmed my gut feeling, or more to the point, “mouth feeling:” the condition of our gums and teeth says a great deal about our overall health, especially with respect to our heart and blood vessels. Specifically, inflammation is the enemy of staying youthful and vigorous, and keeping the inflammation out of your mouth may be an important

step towards preventing many of the most common, serious, chronic diseases we often develop here in modern America.

Inflammation plays an important role in the development of plaque in your blood vessels and ups your risks for heart attack, stroke and Alzheimer’s dementia. Periodontitis, or chronic infections in the gums, is associated with increased inflammation in the bloodstream. Estimates vary, but somewhere between 20 to 80 percent of U.S. adults have some form of periodontal disease. Severe periodontitis, the kind that causes severe inflammation throughout the body, is seen in about one percent of the adult population in the United States—about three million people in all.

**Less plaque on teeth=less plaque in arteries.** The recent studies about gum disease and cardiovascular health are downright frightening—infections and inflammation brewing in your gums are closely linked to the condition of your arteries, including the coronary arteries that supply your heart muscle with oxygen and nutrients. An impressive and startling recent trial found that by doing nothing else but aggressively clearing up the infections in the gums, researchers were able to also make the carotid arteries (these supply the brain) less inflamed and healthier as well.

## Take Home Messages:

1. The health of your teeth and gums is a gauge of inflammation in your overall system.
2. Keeping your gums healthy will help to keep your arteries, heart and



- brain healthy.
3. FLOSS!! At least once each and every day. Brush your teeth at least twice daily. Consider using a Sonicare or other high-quality elec-

tric toothbrush—they tend to clean the teeth and gums more thoroughly than manual toothbrushes, and have a two-minute timer to make sure you brush long enough during each session.

4. Eat a wholesome diet, and follow a healthy lifestyle. The following is a summary of recommendations from a recent paper I co-authored with Pedro Bastos called, “Western Diet and Lifestyle and Diseases of Civilization,” published in **Research Reports in Clinical Cardiology**:

*We are coming to appreciate that if we want to improve health span (the number of years in good health) we cannot rely on any single “magic bullet” whether it be a pill or a single dietary or lifestyle change, but rather through the combination of several measures, such as regular physical exercise, stress reduction, sensible sun exposure (and vitamin D supplementation), adequate sleep, and avoidance of tobacco smoke, smog and other environmental pollutants. In addition, it is critically important to adopt a diet similar to that followed by our hunter-gatherer ancestors (Paleo-diet). Several recent trials have demonstrated that a diet composed of fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and seeds, fish, shellfish, eggs, lean fresh meat and water is far healthier than the standard American diet of processed, high-calorie, unnatural foods and beverages; and this Paleo-diet may even be superior to so-called healthy diets such as the Mediterranean diet.*

## Breakthrough Technology Saves Lives for People with Aortic Stenosis

**A**ortic valve stenosis is the most common, serious valve disease, affecting about 1.5 million people in the United States. This progressive disease most commonly occurs in adults over age 60, and by the time symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath and fainting appear, the disease has a very poor prognosis, with long-term survival as deadly as the worst malignancies, like pancreatic cancer.

The aortic valve is the main outlet valve on the left side of the heart; all the oxygenated blood that gets pumped out to the head and body has to go through the aortic valve. Normally, the aortic valve opens to about the size of a garden hose, and five to 10 quarts of blood per minute are pumped through it.

With severe aortic stenosis, thickening of the leaflets restricts the opening to about the size of a common drinking straw. It's easy to imagine how the heart simply wears out as it struggles to pump blood across this severely narrowed valve. The simple and life-saving solution is to cut out the old crusty clogged up valve and put in a new mechanical (metal and plastic) valve, or a tissue valve from a cow or pig. But that requires a major open heart surgery and many of the people who develop severe aortic stenosis are quite elderly, often over age 75 or 80, with multiple other problems like kidney or lung disease that make surgery too risky. Now these patients have a promising option thanks to a relatively new investigative treatment.

Called a transcatheter aortic valve implantation (TAVI), the procedure uses a collapsible valve that can be introduced into the body through a catheter-based delivery



*The Edwards SAPIEN transcatheter heart valve is used by Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants to treat patients with aortic stenosis.*

system via one of two approaches: through a small incision in the groin (similar to coronary angioplasty or stenting) or with a small incision between the ribs on the left side of the chest. The valve replaces a patient's diseased "native" valve without traditional open-heart surgery.

Physicians at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart and Vascular Institute have the largest experience in the region with this experimental procedure, having performed more than 50 transcatheter aortic valve procedures over the last two and one-half years.

The cardiologists and cardiovascular surgeons perform this procedure as a team in a state-of-the-art cath lab/operating room that houses all the equipment, imaging and monitoring devices necessary to perform open-heart surgeries, like coronary bypass grafting, as well as percutaneous coronary interventions like stenting of the coronary arteries.

Saint Luke's is one of only 22 centers across the U.S. selected to participate as an investigative site in the PARTNER pivotal clinical trial for this procedure. Doctors at

Saint Luke's were chosen for the trial because of their expertise in valve replacement surgery and vast experience in interventional procedures. Results of a TAVI trial were published in the ***New England Journal of Medicine*** and presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions in November 2010.

The results so far show that this procedure provides dramatic life-saving benefits, which will likely continue to improve as we get more experience with the procedure and the technology continues to evolve and progress. "The study found that at one year, patients who had the transcatheter valve replacement had a 54 percent lower risk of death or hospitalization from heart failure, compared to those managed with standard medical therapy alone," explains David J. Cohen, M.D., M.Sc., Director of Cardiovascular Research, Saint Luke's Mid America Heart and Vascular Institute and co-principal investigator of the PARTNER trial.

The data presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions evaluated the extent to which patients' quality of life improved with TAVI. "These patients had early, sustained and substantial improvements in their quality of life," Dr. Cohen says. "They were less likely to be re-hospitalized and more likely to live longer. They also reported a significant improvement in physical abilities, comparable to about a 10-year reduction in age."

The PARTNER trial is currently accepting new patients for evaluation and will continue until the device used, the Edwards SAPIEN transcatheter heart valve, is approved by the FDA. For more information, contact Dr. Cohen at 816-932-4581.

# Red Yeast Rice—A Natural Way to Lower Cholesterol

By James H. O’Keefe, M.D.

**M**y brother Kevin is typical of many people. When he takes a statin to lower his high cholesterol, his muscles ache and he feels generally unwell. Over the past two decades, he has tried taking various statins on at least a dozen different occasions. Each time he tries one, the medication does a marvelous job of getting his cholesterol down to a much healthier level, but after a few weeks he begins to feel soreness in his muscles and joints.

I suggest to him that maybe it’s all in his head, and he tells me, “No James, it’s actually all in my neck—aching pain and stiffness, every time you insist I take one of those prescription statins.” But Kevin’s cholesterol level, when he’s off a statin, runs about 240, despite following a healthy diet and lifestyle. And to make matters worse, a few years ago we discovered a moderate amount of plaque in his coronary arteries on a screening Cardioscan. So it really is critically important that we get his cholesterol down, way down, to less than 160 ideally.

Thankfully, we now have safe and natural over-the-counter (OTC) options for people like Kevin who can’t or won’t take a statin, and for others with high cholesterol, but who are at lower risk and thus may not need the potency of a prescription drug. The most effective OTC option for lowering cholesterol is Red Yeast Rice, a product of a fungus (*monascus purpureus*) grown on rice. The first documentation of the use of Red Yeast Rice was in China during the Tang Dynasty in

800 A.D., where it was recommended for a variety of ailments such as poor blood circulation and indigestion. Red Yeast Rice contains natural compounds called monacolins, which are quite effective at inhibiting cholesterol production by the



liver. In the late 1970s, scientists isolated monacolin-K, also known as lovastatin, from a fungus. This was concentrated and purified and in 1987 lovastatin was approved and marketed as the first statin—the largest selling class of prescription drugs today. Because Red Yeast Rice contains a much lower concentration of monacolins compared to prescription statins, they tend to be much easier to tolerate with fewer side effects.

Studies from Dr. David Becker and others show that Red Yeast Rice can lower the bad (LDL) cholesterol about 20 percent by itself, or up to 40 percent (or as good as simvastatin) when it is combined with high-dose omega-3, another safe, effective and natural OTC supplement. Even more encouraging are studies from China showing that Red Yeast Rice, like statins, may reduce heart attacks and cardiac deaths. The largest of these studies, the China Coronary Secondary Prevention Study, randomized 5,000 people who had suffered a heart attack to Red Yeast Rice or a placebo (inactive look-alike) pill. After four and one-half years the people on the Red Yeast Rice suffered 45 percent fewer heart attacks and 33 percent fewer deaths compared to the group on the placebo. The Red Yeast Rice therapy was safe and well tolerated in this large study.

However, there is a dark side to Red Yeast Rice. Nearly all of it is produced in China, frequently in facilities that would not meet FDA standards for safety or purity. Sometimes Red Yeast Rice of Chinese origin can contain Citrinin, a dangerous chemical that is toxic to kidneys. And other times it can be laced with a pharmaceutical-strength statin, and thus the unsuspecting consumer might actually be taking a highly potent statin despite buying OTC Red Yeast Rice.

The solution is to use a Red Yeast Rice product that is safe, effective and produced under highly regulated conditions. Look for red yeast that is grown and produced in the U.S. The manufacturer should test each batch to be sure that the monacolin content is in the safe and effective range and it is free of any toxins. The standard dose of Red Yeast Rice is two to four capsules per day (1,200 to 2,400 mg per day). You can expect that this will lower your bad LDL cholesterol by 15 to 20 percent. I have had several patients in whom Red Yeast Rice dropped their bad cholesterol from 130 down to 100 or less.

If you want to get the benefits of cholesterol lowering, you have to stick with the therapy for the long-term, years to even decades. In order to do that, whatever therapy you take can’t make you feel miserable. If you are someone who needs a lower cholesterol, but can’t tolerate the statins, or someone without heart disease who doesn’t want to resort to prescription medicines, try Red Yeast Rice in combination with omega -3, and make it a priority to eat right and exercise each day. This is a strategy for impressive cholesterol numbers and a healthy heart today and for decades to come.



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

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## Patients Say the Darndest Things!

♥ Recently, I complained to my mechanic that he charges more per hour than I do as a doctor. He said, "Yeah, well you work on a model that hasn't changed in thousands of years. I have to keep up with new models that come out every year!"

♥ In my pre-med days back in college, I had a classmate who once challenged our physics professor by asking, "Why do we have to learn this obscure stuff anyway?" To which the wise old professor answered, "To save lives." My cynical classmate responded by asking, "How does a knowledge of physics save lives?" The professor answered, "It keeps the idiots out of medical school."

♥ "A new study claims that mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is not necessary during CPR and it's better to skip right to chest compression. However, the study says that you're still required to snuggle for a half hour afterwards."

**Conan O'Brien**

♥ During an office visit Don told me, "After my recent hospital stay I have learned that in a way a hospital gown is kinda like insurance. You're never covered as much as you think you are."

♥ I was chatting with a hospitalized patient whose kidneys had recently failed, "Well Wayne, what did you think of your first dialysis session?" He shrugged, rolled his eyes, and said cynically, "I could live without it." I replied, "No Wayne, actually, you could not live without it."

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