



# For the Heart

Your Newsletter from Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants

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## Home is Where the Heart is

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D. with Joan O'Keefe, R.D.

**D**uring our epic "Blizzard of Oz" this winter, a weather reporter in a parka was interviewing a man who had been stranded in his truck for more than eight hours as the monster snowstorm raged on. Willie, the dejected trucker, looked at the reporter and said in a weary tone, "I just wanna get home."

*"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas any more."*



Dorothy clicks the heels of her ruby slippers three times and says, "There's no place like home; there's no place like home; there's no place like home." As a little boy growing up, this was my favorite line from my favorite movie. After fighting with the evil castle guards, being kidnapped by the scary flying monkeys, and just barely surviving her battle with the nasty Wicked Witch, I was very relieved for Dorothy and Toto when they finally made it safely back home to Kansas.

Now for those of you live on the east side of the Mighty Mo or State Line Road, landing in Kansas may not give you that warm fuzzy feeling of "home;" and I must admit even as an eight-year-old watching The Wizard

of Oz, Kansas seemed like a colorless, dusty and drab kinda place to call home. But you get the idea—there really is no place like home. If you don't believe me, just ask someone who's been in the hospital for a week.

We all long to be at home; which isn't necessarily one particular place. Home is really more about relationships and love than a location or a structure. Pop singer phenom Taylor Swift brings her cat Meredith with her when she is on tour. So even while on the road performing for months at a time, when she comes back to her hotel room and Meredith is there to greet her, Taylor feels she's back home. When you want to relax and renew where do you go? Who is it that you yearn to be around when you need comforting or nurturing? Home is a spot that makes you feel secure—your nest where you get and give unconditional love.

### Home is Sacred

Everybody needs his or her home team. These are the folks who know all your faults and still love you anyway. They are the first people you phone when your car breaks down, the ones who share their secrets with you, and who help themselves to a snack or a drink without asking



when they're at your house. These are our "homies"—the ones who laugh when we laugh and who cry when we cry. We all need them, our middle-of-the-night, no-matter-what people.

When Joan went away to college in San Diego, one evening she called home very distraught about a crisis in her co-ed life. Her mother, Kathleen, calmly listened to her and in a wise and comforting tone said, "Well Joanie, everything is fine at home."

Somehow, just being reassured about the stability of the foundation of her world made her issues seem much less daunting. Now it is our son Evan, who is away in Atlanta going to college. When everything is going well we don't hear from him, but if he has had a rough week and is worried that he may have stumbled

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# Home is Where the Heart is

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on an important exam he calls home to his mother, and needs to be reassured that everything will be okay again.

*“When the bridge is burning and I’m losing my faith, and I’m trying to find my way back to the truth, every road leads home to you.”*

*Richie Sambora*

Nurture your relationships at home. We often take the people closest to us for granted, but they are the underpinnings of our lives. If these relationships fail, the foundation of our life crumbles. There was a time in my life not too long ago when I had lost my way personally and was separated from Joan. Admittedly, it was my own fault, yet, suddenly I found myself without a place to call home.

Like a ship cut loose from its moorings, adrift at sea, and at the mercy of the elements, I felt vulnerable and unprotected. Thankfully, after several weeks we were back together, but the experience gave me a new appreciation for the central importance of home to one’s well-being.

Your job will not take care of you when you get sick or disabled—your loved ones at home will. You probably can’t count on your boss to be there to perk you up when you are discouraged and down on your luck. Every day I am inspired and awed by the families of my patients who tend to the needs of their wife, or grandfather, or husband, or friend with such dedication and tender loving care for years or even decades. Recently I told one of my patients, “Victor, you are so blessed to have such a loving and attentive wife.” He

looked over at her with fondness and said, “Marrying Alice is the by far the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

## Happiness Begins at Home

Decorate your home with things that make you feel happy, proud, and secure, like mementos of fun trips, awards, and pictures of family and friends, and lost loved

ones. Being around these sorts of keepsakes can add pleasure and warmth to your life. Create a sunny, safe haven in your home; make it a cozy room that’s primarily for renewal; a no-TV zone, a place for spending time with your family, friends, and pets, for reading, playing a musical instrument, or enjoying a hobby. Try to make it a well-lit room, with comfy furniture, perhaps a fireplace, ideally with windows that look out at nature.

## Time You Enjoyed Wasting Was Time Well-spent

Most Americans today find themselves working longer hours, doing more multi-tasking, and taking fewer vacations while they try to keep up with what feel like overwhelming demands. The pace of this



non-stop stress and work is unsustainable, and eventually leads to burnout and compromised health and well-being.

Ironically, in the long run, one of the best ways to accomplish more may be to spend more time doing less. Author Tony Schwartz prescribes “strategic renewal” by spending

more time at home rather than at work, adding short exercise breaks during the work day, napping briefly in the early afternoon, sleeping longer at night and taking more vacation days.

Indeed, a growing body of research suggests that these strategies cannot only improve health and well-being, but also boost creativity, productivity, and job performance. We humans are not designed to burn energy and accomplish work continuously. Instead, we thrive best when we cycle between periods of spending energy and renewing energy. When you make it a priority to renew yourself by getting adequate rest, relaxation and play, you will perform much better at your chosen work and enjoy a better overall quality of life.

Live plants, pets, and soft music will also help to bestow contentment to a home. I find that being around live growing plants is relaxing and restorative for me, so I try to spend at least a few minutes almost each day nurturing my green friends. We have a jungle of plants, including many that I move inside in late October and back outside again on a warm day in April. Buy some exercise equipment so when it's too dark, or wet, or cold, or hot outside, you can do your fitness activities without leaving the comfort of your home. Home gym essentials are pretty minimal: a set of hand weights, at least one cardio exercise machine like a treadmill, elliptical trainer, or stationary bicycle, and a yoga mat.

## Home: Your Safest Place to Eat

Researchers tracked about 1,000 people for a week, carefully documenting where and what they ate. What they discovered will not come as a shock: you are likely to eat many more calories when you dine in a restaurant rather than eating at home. Normal weight individuals, on average, consumed 550 calories during a meal at home versus 825 calories at a restaurant. Overweight or obese people consumed 625 calories at home compared to 900 calories when they ate in a restaurant. So when you eat out, you can expect to consume about 50 percent more calories than when you eat at home.

What to do? It's simple, cook and eat at home more often; aim for dining at home at least 14 meals per week. Harvard researchers have found that by eating more of your meals at home, you are twice as likely to be successful in your efforts to lose excess weight, and you will save money to boot. We eat breakfast and dinner at home almost



seven days per week. For our family, probably like yours, lunch for five days a week is by necessity, typically eaten at work or school. Yet even so, for lunch we routinely each build our own large salad, and choose healthy vegetables, top it with a modest amount of lean protein, skip the croutons and fatty dressings and instead drizzle red wine vinegar and olive oil over our creation. In this way you can make your meal out as healthy as lunch at home.

If you don't have access to a healthy salad bar, pack a lunch, and keep it simple: one protein and two or three colors. Eating at home doesn't have to be time consuming or difficult. The key is to have plenty of healthy and easy options at home that are ready to prepare. You are aiming for about 10 servings a day of vegetables and fruit, and home is the easiest place to eat them.

## Somewhere Over the Rainbow

In the last *For the Heart* newsletter, I told the story of Louie, the gentle but emotionally tormented homeless man who lived in my small hometown of Grafton. He suffered

from paranoid schizophrenia, and trusted nobody...except my father, who was a judge in North Dakota.

After my father's death, Louie still stopped by my parents' house nearly every day to visit with my mother. Louie's paranoia mellowed a bit as he grew older and he allowed my mother and her friends, Peggy and John, to find him a government-subsidized apartment.

He still wouldn't change his clothes, shower, or lie in the bed, but he discovered that sleeping on the couch was reassuringly similar to dozing off in the back seat of his car, except he stayed warm and comfortable all night long. One day Louie didn't stop by to check in with my mother, or John and Peggy. They found him in his apartment where he had passed away suddenly and quietly.

For the majority of his nearly 80 years, Louie lived in the shadows of Grafton where his home was the street. Even so, through the decades he grew to be an integral resident and a beloved character. The townspeople turned out in droves for his funeral, and in the crowded church they mourned for Louie as if he were one of their own family.

# A New Home for the Cardio Wellness Center

Thanks to the generous support of Charles Duboc and his late wife Barbara, the Cardio Wellness Program has a new home specially designed to assess and reduce your risks for heart disease. Located at 4321 Washington, Suite 2400, the center is just a few steps from Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants' main offices.

Named the Saint Luke's Charles and Barbara Duboc Cardio Health and Wellness Center, the space features a dedicated waiting area, exam rooms, blood drawing stations, nutritional consultation and staff offices.

Charles Duboc, who lives a life of wellness, believes the program has the potential to not only save lives, but to help individuals lead fuller, more productive lives.

"My hope is that the center can help people live healthier lives, and serve as a model for future work in preventive cardiology through scientific research and education in cardiovascular medicine," Charles Duboc says.

"Charles is a remarkable man who is my personal hero," says James O'Keefe, M.D., one of the center's medical directors. "We just celebrated his 90th birthday, and I have promised to throw him a 100th birthday party a decade from now; I have no doubt that he will be there with a sparkle in his eye and a spring in his step."

Charles earned his doctorate in physics in 1939 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and ever since has continued to challenge his brain by learning complex new concepts. Today Charles is as much of a genius as ever—he spends his free time reading the latest textbooks on theoretical mathematics and astrophysics. He eats a cup of blueberries every morning after discovering



*Gathering for the grand opening of the Saint Luke's Charles and Barbara Duboc Cardio Health and Wellness Center recently were, back row left to right: Bishop Martin Field, Kate White, Jim White, Joe Goeke, M.D., and Ken Huber, M.D. Front row left to right: Linda Duboc Walker, Robert Duboc, Charles Duboc, James O'Keefe, M.D., Richard Moe, M.D., and Becky Captain, N.P.*

that consuming deeply hued berries on a regular basis can lower blood pressure and maintain sharp brain function.

He also gets up every morning and goes for walk in the neighborhood at dawn. "Charles has a good heart in more ways than one, and has been the benefactor to the Cardio-Wellness Center. He is a very humble person who loved his wife Barbara dearly; she passed away several years ago," Dr. O'Keefe says.

Becky Captain, R.N., M.S.N., B.C., F.N.P.-C., manager of the center, says Charles is making it possible to improve the quality of life for current patients, and reach out to the community with other services.

"We now have a dedicated dietitian and nutrition counseling, monthly cooking classes, an additional nurse practitioner, and a full body fat scanner," Captain says. "The scanner will be a tremendous asset to us, telling us the amount of fat throughout the body, as well as how much fat is tucked in and around our organs. Called visceral fat, this is the

most dangerous kind of fat."

Current and new patients of the program will find the staff committed to helping you manage your risks for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and stroke. Patients receive a one-on-one consultation and immediate feedback to improve understanding of and manage potential and existing risk factors.

In addition to routine screenings, the center's other services include:

- ♥ Ankle-brachial index, a 15-minute test for peripheral vascular disease;
- ♥ CardioScan, for only \$50 get a 15-minute non-invasive CT scan of the heart to screen for plaques;
- ♥ Wellness Wednesdays the first Wednesday of each month featuring a free heart risk appraisal and consultation;
- ♥ Community forums and much more!

To schedule an appointment at the new center, call 816-751-8327. For a schedule of upcoming community forums and cooking classes, visit [www.cardiowellnesscenter.org](http://www.cardiowellnesscenter.org).

# It Is What It Is...

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

***“Things work out best for those who make the best of the way things work out.” John Wooden***

An ancient Taoist parable tells the story of a wise old farmer whose only workhorse ran away one day. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors consoled him by saying, “Such bad luck.” The farmer replied, “Maybe.” The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses. “How wonderful,” the neighbors exclaimed. “Maybe,” replied the old man. The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses and was thrown off, fracturing his leg. The neighbors again came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune. “Maybe,” answered the farmer. A few days later, military officials arrived in the village to draft young men into the army. Noting that the son’s leg was broken, they passed him over. The neighbors congratulated the farmer on how well things had turned out. “Maybe,” mused the farmer.

By human nature we tend to label occurrences in our lives as “good” or “bad.” But nobody can see the future so we can never truly understand the long-term consequences of today’s events. “It is what it is,” tends to be a much healthier attitude toward life’s ups and downs. We must mentally adjust to the new reality of things beyond our control, and make the best of situations by controlling what we can. I personally find this to be a very useful strategy for dealing with even routine issues. For example, when my flight was cancelled recently for “mechanical problems,” I reminded myself that a few hours’ delay in my trip would be preferable to an engine failure during the flight.

***“You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.” Max Ehrmann***

Life is a series of highs and lows, windfalls and disappointments; so it’s best to try to maintain a steady, optimistic yet realistic attitude. I try to imagine that we live in a benevolent universe with a grand master plan for me and everyone else. Especially when bad things happen, it is useful to ask: “What if I could trust the universe, even with this?”

Bill suffered a heart attack and needed an urgent stenting procedure to open a blocked coronary artery. Afterwards, he fell into a funk and was feeling sorry for himself. He was clearly depressed, so I encouraged him to start cardiac rehab over at Saint Luke’s Center for Health Enhancement. That was five years ago. Today at age 69, Bill has a strong and healthy heart and a whole group of pals he still exercises with three times a week. He is more fit and happy than ever, and considers some of his exercise partners to be among his dearest friends.

So live one day at a time, and enjoy each moment for what it is without labeling it. When hardships arise, as they always do, realize that maybe they represent pathways to a stronger and wiser you.

***“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.” —Irish Serenity Prayer***



## Quotes “From the Heart”

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

♥ “Life is like bike-riding: it’s fine to enjoy the occasional chance to sit back and coast along for a short while, as long as you remember that in general if you don’t keep pedaling, it won’t be long until you fall down.”

♥ “Harboring resentment is like swallowing poison yourself, and then expecting the other person to die.” **Olivia Fox Cabane**

♥ Dr. O’Keefe: “Your waist size is too big. You need to trim that down by at least two inches.”  
Richard: “No problem—I can do that tomorrow. These Levi Jeans are size 40, but I can squeeze myself into size 38 Wrangler jeans—they run big.”

♥ “Last year when I read about the evils of drinking, I quit reading.” **Henny Youngman**

♥ “Travelers, it is late. Life’s sun is going to set. During these brief days that you have strength, be quick and spare no effort of your wings.” **Rumi (a 13th century Persian Muslim Poet)**

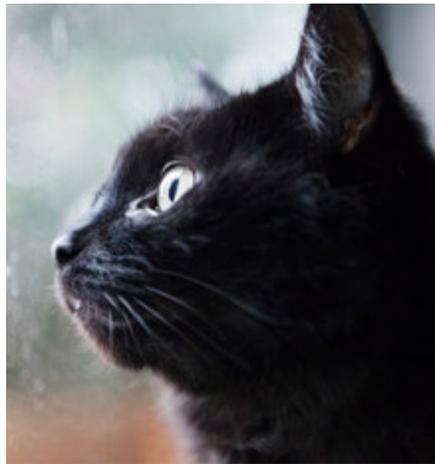
# How Kathleen's "Magic" Touched Our Hearts

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

When our oldest daughter Kathleen was just a toddler, for Christmas we brought her home a tiny little jet-black kitten from the animal shelter. We named him Magic—as in “the magic of Christmas.” His mother was a stray and he was born in an alleyway behind a dumpster on a cold and snowy day. Magic must have surely used up eight of his nine lives during those his first seven weeks; by the time we adopted him he was a scrawny, undernourished, flea-bitten, worm-ridden, anemic little guy who was as weak as a kitten, and then some. With tender loving care and a lot of help from our wonderful family friend/vet, Dr. Steve White, we nursed little Magic back to health, and he grew into a sleek and frisky feline wonder.

Magic emotionally bonded with little Kathleen, who by nature shared many of the same personality traits with her cat—beautiful, confident, smart but sometimes a bit difficult with a “right or wrong... but never in doubt” attitude. The two of them grew up together, and each night Magic would snuggle up and sleep next to the love of his life, in the crook of her knees or next to her head on the pillow. After she went off to school each morning, he pulled her favorite blanket off her bed and down the stairs into a patch of sunshine where he would curl up and sunbathe on it.

In what could pass for a scene from a Harry Potter movie, Magic would watch her intently every night as she did her homework. For hours each evening, as she was reading, writing, and working on her laptop (and checking Facebook), Magic would sit bolt upright on the table-



top just a few feet away from her, staring at Kathleen in admiration; keeping her company long after the rest of us were fast asleep.

When Kathleen was done studying he would follow her back upstairs and as she was taking a shower, Magic would stare in rapt attention—which admittedly on one level was a little creepy, but still—he was just a cat.

Despite his devotion, Magic could be a pill; when he was in a cranky mood (which he broadcast by pointing his ears backwards) and someone tried to pet him, he might bite—never breaking the skin but always eliciting a shriek of horror from the victim. Yet much of the time he was very affectionate, and he was a ruthless mouser... both indoors and out. It was most definitely bad luck for any rodent who happened to cross paths with this black cat. Magic proudly left us presents of dead mice that we often discovered on the doorstep the next morning.

Joan is an animal lover who has an uncanny ability to emotionally connect with each of our three cats and three dogs. When Kathleen left the house one morning recently, Joan sensed a profound sadness in Magic, so she tried to cheer him up by saying, “Don’t worry, she’ll

be back soon.” But I think what she perceived was Magic’s premonition that his life with Kathleen was coming to an end.

Later that day, he curled up on my lap and as I scratched his ears, he purred and dozed off for a nap. The next morning we woke up and found that Magic, at age 16, had passed away quietly in his sleep. Magic was our first cat, and although I never thought of myself as a cat person, I really miss him. He was a beloved character in our family. Kathleen, who is now 17, has had Magic purring next to her for as long as she can remember. She left for school the day of his death with mascara-stained tears streaming down her cheeks and an aching in her heart.

Around the O’Keefe household, we are big fans of both the canine and feline domestic species. You might be surprised to know that cats as compared to dogs have twice as many neurons in their cerebral cortex—the higher thinking portion of the brain. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods wrote, “With half as many neurons in their cerebral cortex as cats—and half the attitude, some would say—dogs are often taken to be the less intelligent domestic partner. While dogs drink out of the toilet, slavishly follow their master and need a chaperone to relieve themselves, cats hunt self-sufficiently and survey their empire with a regal gaze.”

It’s our relationships that bring meaning and true happiness to our lives. And a connection with a cat (and/or a dog) can be a very powerful life force that inspires and comforts us, bringing joy and love... and eventually, deep sadness and pain, when we lose our adoring and adored animal friends.

# Eating Berries Cuts Risk of Heart Attack by One-third

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

**N**ow you have another great reason to add blueberries and strawberries to your weekly shopping list. A recent study featured in the American Heart Association's (AHA) journal, *Circulation*, garnered major attention when it found that women who ate three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries every week for almost 20 years dramatically reduced their risks for having a heart attack.

That's good news for those of us concerned with preventing heart disease, the leading cause of death for women in the United States, and the culprit behind one in every four female deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

In fact, recent research has found that women are more likely to die from heart attacks than men. The AHA says that's because women may be more likely to experience other heart attack symptoms besides chest pain that may be harder to pick up, such as shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

These researchers surveyed 93,600 female nurses between 25 and 42 who were part of a long-running study in which they filled out questionnaires about their diets every four years for 18 years.

Out of the large study pool, only 405 heart attacks occurred. Women who ate the most blueberries and strawberries were found to be 32 percent less likely to have a heart attack, compared to women who ate berries once a month or less. That was found to be true even for women who ate diets rich in fruits and vegetables, but not those two berries.

The study was observational, meaning it did not show a direct



cause-and-effect relationship between berries and heart attack protection; the link was simply observed by researchers after ruling out other factors that may contribute to heart attacks.

I have always thought of berries as nature's candy—a delicious and nutritious treat that I eat once or twice a day. Berries such as frozen wild blueberries, and fresh strawberries and blackberries, are by far my favorite fruits.

Among all the various fruits out there, berries are the best choice for improving your health and longevity. Berries are great for both brain health and heart health and one of the very best foods you can consume. I make a habit of having blueberries and strawberries every day, usually with a protein source like raw unsalted nuts and/or non-fat Greek yogurt.

A diet high in antioxidants from sources that include blueberries and strawberries, but also blackberries, 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. Additional studies indicate that eating blueberries on a regular basis, especially wild blueberries, which are a rich source of potent antioxidants, can lower blood pressure and maintain sharp brain function.

The AHA supports eating berries as part of an overall balanced diet that also includes other fruits,

vegetables, and nuts. Other ways women can reduce their risks for heart disease include regular exercise, reducing stress, avoiding smoking (and second-hand smoke, which has been shown to increase risk), and reducing salt-intake.

So go ahead and indulge your cravings for blueberries and strawberries. They're a tasty treat that is proving delicious and an essential part of a heart-healthy diet for women and men alike.

## Get Busy



### Three Health Benefits of an Active Sex Life

- 1** Well-being/Quality of Life: Promotes emotional bonding, intimacy and relaxation, reduces anxiety and depression, relieves pain, strengthens immunity, and improves sleep.
- 2** Youthful Glow: People who were having sex about four times per week with a steady partner were perceived to be 7 to 12 years younger than their actual age.
- 3** Fun, Exhilarating Workout: A romp can burn anywhere from 85 to 250 calories.

# The Power of a Story

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D. and Joan O'Keefe, R.D.



*Editor's Note: Joan and I have recently published a new book called "Let Me Tell You a Story." Here, we share a couple of excerpts from the book, including our motivation for writing it. We hope you will enjoy this brief sample. If you'd like to read more, the book is available at local bookstores and online through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).*

**W**e have four children; I have been telling them bedtime stories for 26 years. Our youngest child, Caroline, just turned 13 and my bedtime story telling days are winding down. Still, people of all ages love to hear stories; they entertain us, but they also teach us about the world.

Joan often speaks on nutrition, and loves how, when she says, "Let me tell you a story," the audience sets down their smart phones and reading materials, looks intently up at her and listens in rapt attention.

Story telling is not only fun, but also is how the human brain best learns new concepts and internalizes information that can change one's perspective and alter behavior.

We are all immersed in "data-smog" today. Scientific findings and statistics are churned out at an ever-quicken pace. Recent estimates state that the entire body of scientific knowledge has doubled just since the year 2000. It has become unmanageable to keep up with all the science on health, nutrition, fitness, and wellness. So many people just throw up their hands in frustration, not knowing what to believe, while continuing to follow lifestyles and diets that are often toxic. Yet knowl-

edge is power; you and your loved ones need this information if you are to thrive in this 21st century environment that is so foreign to our genetic identity.

Let Me Tell You a Story is a book of true stories about real people, though their names have been changed except where they have preferred that we disclose their identities. The stories might be derided as anecdotal by hardcore scientists, but we used them as examples to illustrate important concepts based on state-of-the-art science and the power of our Forever Young Diet and Lifestyle program (as we outlined in our previous book by the same title).

Story telling is as old as the human race. A story is the re-telling of an experience, described with enough detail and feeling to make it seem real to the reader. We hope that these stories will inspire you to take advantage of the marvels of modern science, while at the same time remaining true to the diet and exercise patterns that bestowed strength and well-being upon our ancient ancestors while they were thriving in their wild, natural environment.

Our driving passion is YOU. Your health, happiness, and longevity are deeply important to us: we hope you enjoy our stories, and that this book revolutionizes your life.

## Once Upon a Time...

A California girl with twinkling eyes and a charming smile met a guy in Minnesota who found her to be the most beautiful woman he had ever known. They fell in love,

and after a couple years of dating they were married.

One year later, at age 27, she became pregnant, which began innocently enough, but as the weeks ticked by her usual boundless energy started to diminish. By mid-pregnancy she felt drained, and her stamina was falling off dramatically.

One cool April evening as they strolled together with his right arm draped around her shoulders, he happened to feel an ominous lump adjacent to her right collarbone. The next morning at her doctor's office, an X-ray confirmed their worst fears: a massive grapefruit-sized tumor was displacing her heart and lungs; the worrisome nodule they felt the day before was a metastasis.

From there it was a downward spiral into a medical calamity and an emotional nightmare. The doctors told them that the odds that the mother and her baby would both survive were small. The brightest and best cancer specialists at the Mayo Clinic urgently formulated a treatment to try to save the two of them from a large and aggressive malignancy that was on the move—its deadly tentacles invading throughout her chest.

The jeopardized baby was to be protected from the radiation by a home-made wooden frame constructed in the garage of one of the X-ray technologists. Before each radiation therapy session, this frame was positioned over her belly and then loaded sheet by sheet with 500 pounds of lead. Nearly lethal doses of radiation were focused at the largest mass behind her breast bone. Meanwhile, the tiny baby oblivious to the danger, curled up in the womb only a few inches away from

the targeted tumor. She received eight weeks of daily radiation treatment, even as the baby inside her seemed to be growing normally.

The little family of three shuddered under the weight of their troubles—the lives of two of them hung in the balance. Already weakened by pregnancy, cancer, harsh radiation therapy, and severe anemia, she was now facing a major surgery to deliver the baby by Caesarian section and to remove her spleen.

During the surgery, the C-section was performed first; once delivered, the premature baby turned blue as he struggled for oxygen. He was whisked away to the neonatal intensive care where he required emergency intubation and a ventilator to help him breathe. The mother came through the surgery, but still faced months more of radiation therapy in an attempt to fully eradicate the metastatic cancer.

***“My desire and my will were being driven by the love which moves the sun and the other stars.”***  
— From *Dante’s Inferno*

This story might have ended badly, indeed the doctors told them to, “Hope for the best but prepare for the worst.” The morning after surgery, from her bed in the intensive care unit, the mother while staring at a Polaroid picture of her helpless and tiny newborn, tubes down his nose and mouth, a forlorn look in his eyes, felt a powerful force stirring within her soul.

Moved by an intense and unstoppable love, she told herself during that moment, “I will survive this siege, whatever it takes.” She knew that her baby needed her desperately and that nobody could ever replace her maternal love and nurturing.



Joan and James O'Keefe with their four children, Kathleen, Jimmy, the subject of this story, Evan and Caroline.

***“He who has a why to live, can bear almost any how.”***  
—Friedrich Nietzsche



Joan and Jimmy shortly after he was born.

The woman in this story is Joan, and the baby boy is our 26-year-old son Jimmy (see the photos above) who is now enrolled in Harvard Business School. Incidentally, the other three kids in that top photo are the natural-born children that the medical experts told Joan she would never have.

This triumph against all odds was no coincidence. We learned how to take the best of both worlds:

the wonders of modern medicine combined with healing and strength from following the natural diet and lifestyle of our ancient hunter-gatherer ancestors.

Also, my wife and children might not be alive today if not for the support of our family, friends, and community who rallied behind us and buoyed our spirits during some dark days. And finally, Joan’s faith in God gave her the optimism and peace to endure and ultimately overcome a situation that would have otherwise felt overwhelming.

The experience transformed us in a baptism by fire, wherein we came to appreciate how precious life is, and how we need to take care of one another. I would like to tell you that this program is really complicated, and that we are really smart, but it’s actually simple and straightforward. Part of our passion for longevity, health, and wellness comes from concern for our children. We want to help them to realize their full potential, live long and happy lives, and make the world a better place. Your story can be magical too, and we wrote this book for you.

# Eat Like a Mediterranean Peasant; Enjoy Regal Health for a Century

By James H. O'Keefe, M.D. and Joan O'Keefe, R.D.

One of the most impressive diet studies ever done showed that a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, nuts, beans, fish, fruits, and vegetables, along with mild to moderate amounts of wine with meals, prevented about one-third of heart attacks, strokes, and cardiovascular deaths.

This large and scientifically rigorous study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in February 2013, had to be stopped early after about five years because the results were so dramatic that the researchers said it would have been unethical to continue with the trial. The beauty of this diet is that it produced these startling benefits using a nicely balanced diet that encourages a moderate amount of healthy fats, succulent fruits, fresh vegetables, fish, legumes, nuts, olive oil, and even wine on a daily basis; so you can live longer and healthier and still enjoy life too.

In this study, the Mediterranean diet group was instructed to eat at least three servings a day of fruits and at least two serv-

ings of vegetables, additionally they were told to eat fish at least three times a week and legumes such as beans, peas and lentils, three or more times a week.

White meat was encouraged instead of red meat, and for those accustomed to alcohol, they were advised to drink at least seven glasses of wine a week with meals. Participants were encouraged to avoid commercially made cookies, cakes, and pastries and to restrict their consumption of dairy products and processed meats. These dramatic benefits are almost certainly due to the entire range of foods and beverages consumed as part of the Mediterranean diet, rather than just the extra-virgin olive oil or nuts.

## Tasting the Real Mediterranean Diet in Italy

During a recent trip to southern Italy, Joan and I stayed in the little seaside village of Pioppi—the home of the Mediterranean diet. During the 1940s and 1950s Ancel Keys, a famous American nutritionist, lived with and studied the people of Pioppi. He came to the conclusion that among the various eating styles from around the world, the traditional cuisine of the people living on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, especially in France, southern Italy, Crete, and Sardinia was a major reason



for their remarkable health and longevity.

Keys personally adopted this Mediterranean cuisine for his own diet, and went on to live for 102 years as one of the most notable scientists of the 20th century. This style of eating, which has been followed for centuries by the peasants of the Mediterranean region, seems to be especially effective for keeping the heart and brain youthful and for preventing diseases like diabetes and Alzheimer's.

On our trip we became friends with Luigi, a native of this region of Italy, who for an entire day took us up into the countryside to meet and dine with his friends: Maria Theresa and Frederico. They lived and worked on a family farm that has for centuries produced nearly all of the food and beverages that their family consumes. They have an olive grove and make their own extra-virgin olive oil each year. They also have grapevines and produce a delicious dry red table wine that we enjoyed during the time we spent with them. They grow tomatoes, eggplant, carrots, greens, onions, and garlic, all of which were part of the feast they prepared for us.



We stopped at a local fish shop on our way to visit Maria Theresa and Frederico. We purchased mackerel and octopus that had been caught only two hours before, and was so fresh, it was still alive and had the salt-spray scent of the sea.

Traditionally, the Mediterranean diet included very little meat, because the poor people of this region could not afford it. Instead they ate fish, nuts, beans, and small amounts of cheese. Indeed, Frederico served us a modest portion of a low-fat soft white cheese that they made earlier that morning from the milk of their two dairy cows. While they milked the cows, Joan bonded with the month-old calf in the barn.

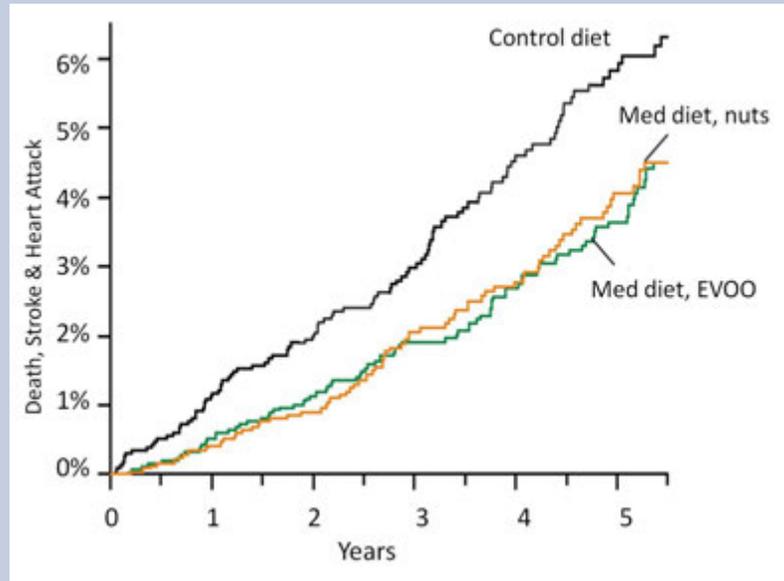
We dressed our salad with olive oil and fresh juice from lemons picked from trees also growing on their land. Joan and I like to think of ourselves as connoisseurs of olive oil (at home in our household of four, we go through over a liter of olive oil each week). Maria Theresa's delicious extra-virgin olive oil had a green tint and left a peppery burn at the back of the throat—evidence of very high levels of antioxidants—the potent age-defying, disease-fighting compounds found in high-quality olive oil.

During our day at their farm, we drank water, coffee, and a couple glasses of red wine with dinner. The Mediterranean peasants of ages past who performed hard manual labor for hours each day ate moderate amounts of bread and pasta; today, most people lead more sedentary lives and thus are better off avoiding these fattening foods, or consuming them in only very limited quantities.

This diet is high in fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, and omega-3 and monounsaturated fats; and is low in saturated fat, processed foods, and sugar. Interestingly, the scientific studies looking at the Mediterranean eating style generally show that it

## Death, Stroke and Heart Attack

### Mediterranean Diet Decreases Stroke, Heart Attack and Death



Reference: Estruch et al, NEJM 2013, Feb. 25.

### Essence of the Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle

- ♥ Fresh vegetables with each meal.
- ♥ Fresh fish and legumes daily.
- ♥ Extra-virgin olive oil.
- ♥ Red wine in moderation.
- ♥ Fresh fruit for snacks and/or dessert.
- ♥ Fresh nuts and seeds.
- ♥ Small amounts of meat used to flavor dishes rather than as the main focus of the meal.
- ♥ Modest amounts of dairy, mostly unsweetened plain yogurt and low-fat cheese.
- ♥ Daily physical activity, much of it outdoors in the sunshine and fresh air.
- ♥ Emphasis on smaller serving sizes, fresh foods, and nutritional balance, with focus on pleasure, conversation, and companionship during meals.

is not one single component that makes this diet so healthy, but rather the constellation of foods and beverages, along with an active outdoor lifestyle and an emphasis on socializing with family and friends.

During our leisurely meal that lasted almost three hours, we ate multiple small, tasty, and nutritious

portions and bonded with our new Mediterranean friends. Afterwards, we strolled around the grounds and enjoyed the natural beauty of their land. The Mediterranean diet is delicious and can keep you healthy and happy for a century, as it did for Ancel Keys, the Minnesota boy who adopted this diet in middle age.

# The Rules of the Mediterranean Diet

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

**Y**ou want to feel great, think clearly, and enjoy life for almost a century? You are going to have to be very smart about what, where, and when you eat. The power of an ideal diet is unparalleled for rebuilding a healthier and more vigorous you. But let's be clear: you must consistently do three things:

- 1 Eat and drink the right stuff.
- 2 Strictly avoid the wrong stuff.
- 3 Don't eat for about 12 hours during the nighttime hours.

This eating plan is tasty, fresh, and brimming with nutritious foods and drinks; it's low in caloric density, but high in fiber, and will keep you energized and satisfied for hours. Your genome has been designed by evolution for hundreds of thousands of years to thrive with this diet and this pattern of letting your system purify itself for about 12 hours each night. Eating and drinking this way will completely change the way your genes work, and will create "a whole new you."

First and foremost, you must eat a lot of fresh, colorful, non-starchy vegetables, ideally at least four to five cups daily.

Additionally, eat low-glycemic fruits like berries, apples, oranges, etc.; about two cups daily. Also, consume a healthy protein like fish (not fried), non-fat yogurt, black beans, eggs, and skinless poultry, etc., with each of your three daily meals. Make sure your protein serving size is about the size of the palm of your

hand. Fresh, lean red meat (grass-fed or game meat is ideal) is acceptable two or three times per week, but try to cook at low temperatures (ideally to not more than medium-rare). Include a modest amount of healthy fat in each meal, like nuts or seeds (a serving size is one small handful), extra-virgin olive oil, avocados, etc. For beverages, choose mostly non-caloric options such as water, tea (green tea is best), and coffee (hold the cream and sugar).

Low-sodium V8® juice is the only juice you should drink—it's a two-fer: you get fluids and it's like drinking your vegetables.

Try to consume one or two servings of dairy daily, nonfat or low-fat (not more than one percent fat). If you are lactose intolerant, try coconut milk.

If you can be disciplined about moderation, red wine, about one or two glasses, just before or with the evening meal, can provide benefit to your health and well-being.

Equally important as consuming the foods and drinks that make you thrive, is not consuming the foods and beverages that cause accelerated aging and chronic diseases. Let's make this simple and straightforward: consume almost nothing with added sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, or artificial sweeteners. The only exception we personally make is one tablespoon of artificially sweetened Metamucil each day.

Also, largely avoid grains, especially processed grains. One small



serving (one-half cup) once daily of wild rice, steel-cut oats, quinoa, or pearly barley is okay for most people.

Eat and drink nothing made of wheat; even whole-wheat products are off limits. Make it your priority to consume things that are as close to their natural state as possible.

Try to avoid foods and beverages that contain more than about two or three ingredients.

Don't believe the old urban myth that how many calories you consume is the only factor that determines your waistline. Recent studies refute that old idea that "a calorie is a calorie." We can now state confidently that not all calories have similar effects on metabolism (resting metabolic rate), appetite, cardiovascular risk factors, and weight.

It should come as no surprise that the best kinds of calories are those that come from unprocessed, low-glycemic-index foods. So choose unprocessed whole natural foods whenever you can and cut back on high-glycemic index foods like anything with concentrated or added sugars, and all processed grains including white bread, white rice, potato products, and prepared breakfast cereals.

## Extra-Virgin Olive Oil Keeps Skin Looking Younger

Author Elizabeth Gilbert writes about being on a train in Italy when a man she happened to be sitting next to remarked, “You’re not too fat for an American woman.” She replied, “Thanks; and you’re not too greasy for an Italian man.”

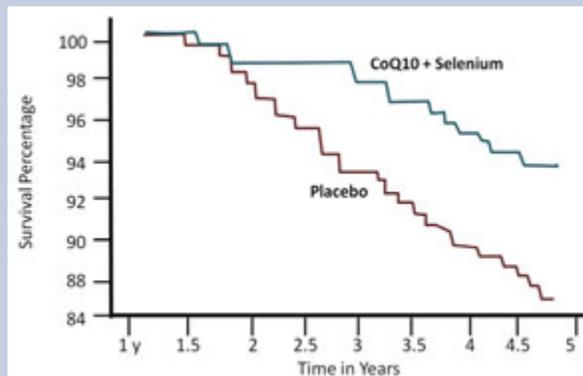
That oily skin common among the people of Italy is not a genetic trait, but rather a consequence of a diet rich in olive oil. In fact, when you eat the classic Mediterranean diet that is high in olive oil and nuts you might find that you need to wash your hair and skin more often to keep it from getting oily. Yet the healthy monounsaturated fats and age-defying antioxidants in extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) are great for keeping your skin and indeed your whole body looking and feeling younger.

When we were in Italy, Joan and I were often mistaken for native Italians, probably because we too consume large quantities of EVOO, and thus have oily skin.

A recent study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* followed more than 40,000 middle-aged people for an average of 13.4 years and found that those who consumed about two tablespoons or more of olive oil per day had a 44 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease and a 26 percent lower risk of dying from any cause. A team of Spanish researchers recently published a study in the *Journal of Nutrition* showing that adherence to the traditional Mediterranean diet markedly improved longevity. Among over 15,000 people, those who most closely followed a Mediterranean diet had a 50 percent lower risk of dying during the follow-up period.

# Potential Benefits of CoQ10

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) is shaping up to be one of the most important nutritional supplements for many people, especially for anyone with heart disease or cardiovascular risk factors like high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Indeed, CoQ10 is a key enzyme used in the mitochondria, which are the little power plants where our cells generate and store nearly all of the energy needed to power our bodies. The brain, heart and muscles, because of their high energy requirements, are especially dependent upon adequate levels of CoQ10 for optimal function. CoQ10, through its antioxidant activities, also helps protect the body from free radicals, which are dangerous compounds that tend to oxidize (rust) everything from DNA to cholesterol, thereby predisposing to premature aging and disease.



Randomized Trial Showing CoQ10 and Selenium Improved Five-Year Survival. Reference: Alehagen et al, *Int J Cardiol* 2012.

CoQ10 is incorporated into the mitochondria where it facilitates the chemical conversion of fats and sugars into energy. An increasingly convincing body of scientific evidence indicates that supplementing with CoQ10 may improve energy production in the mitochondria and positively impact overall health and well-being.

In the process of normal aging, we tend to decrease our production of CoQ10 by up to 70 percent or more. After age 45, particularly for those who remain very physically active, this can start causing age-related problems with muscle, brain, and heart function.

Importantly, statin drugs, particularly at higher doses, can also reduce the body’s ability to manufacture CoQ10 by another 40 percent. Statin drugs lower cholesterol levels by inhibiting an enzyme in the liver, which not only reduces the production of cholesterol, but it also lowers production of coenzyme Q10. This can predispose to muscle aching and weakness, and fatigue. Therefore, it may be especially important to supplement with CoQ10 if you are: over age 45, physically active, or on a statin drug. Additionally, CoQ10 is often used as a nutritional supplement in the setting of a wide variety of heart-related conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, and congestive heart failure.

CoQ10 may help your cells boost their energy production back to youthful levels. Thousands of research studies suggest possible roles for CoQ10 to: maintain normal blood pressure levels; support healthy immune system function; support the normal function of brain and nervous system; and promote healthy heart function.

This nutrient is very difficult to absorb and thus only 1 percent of the CoQ10 found in many formulations is actually absorbed into the bloodstream. So look for a CoQ10 in a highly absorbable formulation.

# TAVR Procedure Brings New Life to Patient

**A**s the mother of four, 86-year-old Ann Guy has always enjoyed cooking, so when she lost her zest for life and her energy to cook, she knew something was wrong. "I wasn't able to do anything," Guy says. "I was short of breath and just wasn't getting around well."

Her cardiologists at Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants agreed there was a problem. After a thorough assessment in the Saint Luke's Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Valve Center, they determined that Guy had severe aortic stenosis, a common problem in older adults that often causes shortness of breath, chest pain, and fainting.

Normally, the aortic valve should be about the size of a garden hose. Five to 10 quarts of blood pump through it every minute. But with severe aortic stenosis, the valve thickens, restricting the opening to about the size of a common drinking straw and limiting blood flow.

The standard treatment for aortic stenosis has been surgical aortic valve replacement. Replacing the valve surgically can prolong life and improve the patient's quality of life, but because of her other heart and health problems, Guy wasn't a good candidate for surgery.

But a procedure called transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR), which has been approved by the FDA for high-risk or inoperable patients, was an option for Guy. TAVR uses a collapsible valve that can be introduced into the body through a catheter-based delivery 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 Valve Center team replaced Ann Guy's diseased aortic valve with an Edwards Sapien valve, shown above.*

the chest. The valve replaces the patient's diseased "native" valve.

Adnan Chhatriwalla, M.D., cardiologist, and Sanjeev Aggarwal, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon, both with the Valve Center, evaluated Guy for the procedure and agreed this was her best option for treatment. "Without TAVR, Mrs. Guy's life expectancy at one year was only 50 percent," Dr. Chhatriwalla says.

The doctors performed the procedure in July 2012. After spending several days in the Mid America Heart Institute recovering, Guy returned to her Olathe home, where she continues her rehabilitation.

"The procedure went very well," Guy says. "The results have been just wonderful. I felt better right away. I'm no longer as short of breath and I can cook and do so much more than before. The doctors said it would improve my quality of life, and it has. I have a lot

more strength. I feel very blessed that they recommended me for this procedure."

Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute was the first hospital in the region to use TAVR and was one of only 20 U.S. centers that participated in the PARTNER trial. The trial evaluated TAVR with the Edwards Sapien Valve in 1,057 patients who were at high risk for standard surgery. The benefits of TAVR were impressive, reducing one-year mortality in patients treated with TAVR by more than 50 percent.

"As Mrs. Guy's case demonstrates, quality of life is substantially improved in patients undergoing TAVR," Dr. Chhatriwalla says.

Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute is currently enrolling patients in the PARTNER-2 trial, which is evaluating a new generation of the Edwards Sapien Valve for treatment of patients who are at intermediate or high risk for complications of surgical aortic valve replacement.

"With the technology now available, patients with severe aortic stenosis can be evaluated for TAVR or surgery, both within and outside the scope of a clinical trial, based upon their clinic status and preferences," Dr. Chhatriwalla says.

The Saint Luke's Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Valve Center is a unique clinic where cardiologists and cardiac surgeons evaluate patients together to develop the best plan of care for each individual. "This level of cooperation is not common in medicine, but is essential for this novel procedure and this complex patient population," Dr. Chhatriwalla says.

For more information about TAVR, please contact the Valve Center at 816-932-8258 or email [heartvalvecenter@saint-lukes.org](mailto:heartvalvecenter@saint-lukes.org).

# The Surprising Power of Pumpkin Seeds

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

**H**ippocrates, the father of medicine, taught his students 2,500 years ago, "Let food be your medicine." While you probably think of pumpkins only as decorations for Halloween and Thanksgiving, their seeds provide a potent combination of vitamins, minerals, and other health-promoting nutrients.

Pumpkins (*Cucurbita pepo*) are native to North America, where the American Indians traditionally prized these large orange gourds for their nutritional and multi-functional uses. New information indicates that the pumpkin seed may be a powerful functional food that is particularly effective for treating bladder dysfunction, and might also help in treating and preventing heart disease, osteoporosis, and arthritis.

## Improving Bladder Function

Many people in middle age and beyond are plagued by urinary problems that often disturb their sleep. They are awakened one or more times nightly with the urge to urinate. Though many of these people resort to prescription medications for this problem, a handful of pumpkin seeds daily might be a safer and more effective treatment.

Pumpkin seeds appear to be remarkably effective in treating overactive bladder, a condition that causes a sudden urge to urinate and can sometimes result in mild urinary incontinence. Studies show that about one in six adult men and women suffer with symptoms of overactive bladder including urinary urgency, and frequent daytime and night urination. An overactive bladder can disturb sleep and reduce overall enjoyment of life.

Encouraging results have been reported in both animal and human studies using pumpkin seeds for treating overactive bladder, showing significant decreases in the number of daytime and nighttime urinations and improved quality of sleep. Furthermore, pumpkin seeds appear to provide significant relief for aging men dealing with urinary problems caused by BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia), or an enlarged prostate. One study found that a pumpkin seed extract used for three months in 53 men ages 50 to 80 years old increased urinary flow volume (urine stream) by 40 percent and decreased nighttime urinary frequency 30 percent, compared with those on placebo.

## For Healthy Heart, Strong Bones

Pumpkin seeds appear to improve several cardiovascular disease risk factors. Studies of animals and humans show that pumpkin seeds can reduce cholesterol, especially the bad LDL cholesterol. One potential reason that pumpkin seeds reduce LDL cholesterol may be their high concentration of phytosterols, which are plant compounds that decrease absorption of cholesterol from the diet.

Among nuts and seeds, pumpkin seeds are near the top in phytosterol content. Pumpkin seed oil has also been found to have favorable effects on the HDL, or good cholesterol. In one randomized controlled study, pumpkin seed oil caused a 16 percent increase in HDL cholesterol levels and a 7 percent drop in diastolic blood pressure levels, probably through the positive effects on the production of nitric oxide, a benefi-

cial compound made by the lining of healthy young blood vessels.

Pumpkin seeds are high in magnesium, phosphorous, and zinc—minerals that are key to maintaining strong bones and preventing osteoporosis. Additionally, powerful antioxidant compounds present in pumpkin seeds may also ease inflammation associated with arthritis.

## Summary

Pumpkin seeds with their remarkable array of health-promoting nutrients, including magnesium, vegetable protein, niacin, and zinc, along with high tryptophan and essential fatty acids, provide a powerful health boost that lowers risk factors for heart disease and osteoporosis and provides powerful relief for people suffering from overactive bladder or prostate enlargement. Make it a point to include these nutritional stars in your diet on a daily basis to reap their wide-ranging health benefits.

## How to Add Pumpkin Seeds to Your Diet:

- ♥ Add pumpkin seeds to soups, stews, and meatloaf.
- ♥ Sprinkle them on top of salads, berries, and yogurt.
- ♥ Have a handful or two of raw or roasted pumpkin seeds (also called pepitas) daily as a snack.



# I'm Funny Looking, You're Funny Looking

By Frank Forencich

Sports commentators sometimes tell us that “every athlete dies twice.” The first death comes when injury forces the star into retirement; the second comes some years later when his heart beats for the last time. But it’s not just athletes who suffer two deaths in a single lifespan; the same might well be said for the vast majority of sedentary Americans.

In this sense, the first death comes in middle school, when we begin to feel social exposure and the weight of social judgment. Suddenly, for the first time in our lives, we feel self-conscious. Other kids tease us about the odd proportions of our bodies and the look of our faces, our skin, our hair; cruel nicknames begin to circulate and cliques begin to form, all based on appearance. Looking in the mirror, we begin to fear that maybe we don’t look quite right; our faces and our bodies sure don’t look like the people on the TV or the models on the magazine covers. Shocked and even horrified, we conclude that there must be something wrong with us.

The effect goes beyond teenage insecurity and anxiety. Desperate to put a stop to our exposure and the threat of humiliation, we begin to behave differently. We try to look cool and dress to fit in. But even more to the point, we also start restricting our body movements and physical expression. Physical movement means exposure and so we inhibit our bodies. If we’re good at sports or dance or something “official,” we might find an acceptable refuge for our physicality, but if not, we just hunker down and hide out. We stop playing and try to look



*Frank...and a (very) distant relative.*

dignified, whatever that means. For many, this marks the beginning of the end, the first step on the road to sedentary living, obesity, diabetes and heart disease. For many of us, this is our first death.

Of course, social anxiety doesn’t strike every middle-school student, nor does it account for every case of sedentary living in the modern world. There are plenty of people who have managed to maintain their physicality in spite of social pressure. But there’s a very real epidemic going on here, something we see played out every day in the modern adult world: people who are massively inhibited about moving their bodies in any public setting, people who simply refuse to express their innate physicality. Even apart from the downstream health consequences of sedentary living, this must be seen as a disease state in and of itself.

To make matters worse, modern media adds to this social pathology by stoking the fires of self-doubt and distorting our image of what “normal” looks like. Exceptional imagery reminds us of our physical inadequacies, thousands of times every day. But the media lies and they do it intentionally. The faces and bodies that appear in print, especially those associated with “health and fitness,” are neither average nor normal. In fact, models are selected from a huge pool of prospects and

photographed under ideal conditions. Then, when the perfect image is selected, the Photoshopping begins: every flaw is eliminated, every wrinkle is smoothed, every bulge and imperfection is wiped clean. The end result is something completely unreal and plastic, something that simply does not actually exist in the natural world.

This is not just a matter of graphic artists trying to make their publications look better. In fact, the images that finally make it to the magazine cover are intentional distortions, designed from scratch to fuel our sense of inadequacy. Marketers and advertisers are well aware of our so-called “pain points.” As they see it, their job is to create unhappiness and fuel our discontent, all in order that we might buy their products. This effort is completely deliberate and premeditated. If people feel insecure about their bodies and their lives, so much the better. And in this respect, health and fitness glossies are actually a powerful health negative.

And so our challenge: If we’re ever going to come to peace with our bodies and create a physically authentic lifestyle, it’s essential that we free ourselves from peer pressure and the artificial imagery we see in print and on screen. In short, we need to escape the glossy magazine trap and start looking at real people, face-to-face.

When we turn away from the glossies, we begin to realize that the vast, overwhelming majority of us look nothing like cover models. In fact, most of us are well, “funny looking.” We’ve got asymmetrical features, blotchy skin, odd dimensions and ungainly movements. In

*Continued on page 17*

## Funny Looking

*Continued from page 16*

short, we are beautiful individuals.

Being funny looking is not an exception; it is the norm, a human universal. Exceptional-looking people, in their non-Photoshopped state, are rare. And while they might well be nice to look at on occasion, their appearance does not qualify them to be models for how we ought to live. We should not aspire to be like them, nor should we feel inadequate when we aren't.

And while we're at it, we would also do well to give our mirrors a closer look. Except for practical grooming, mirrors are a distraction and a major source of unhealthy self-consciousness. Remember, mirrors are a very recent human invention. The vast majority of people who have ever lived have had very little idea of what they looked like. Just imagine going through your entire life, never having to sweat your appearance or worry about what people think. Imagine how liberating that would be. Take your mirrors down and feel the freedom that comes with it.

Remember too that moving your body during the course of the day is a natural act and our birthright. When you take it upon yourself to move your body within eyeshot of other people, you are not the strange one. You are not deviant. You are normal; you are simply doing what your body wants.

So it's time to get over our inhibitions. Yes, you are funny looking. So am I. So are your friends and your co-workers.

So stop with the glossies and the TV. Stop with the mirrors.

Stop worrying about what other people think.

Start moving your body for the sheer pleasure of it.

You are beautiful.



*The Ka'ba. Photo by Ibrahim M. Saeed, M.D.*

## A Bedouin Breakfast

By Ibrahim M. Saeed, M.D.

**H**ow did I walk all day long with only breakfast in my belly? That depends on the breakfast. As a Muslim, my faith asks me to try to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in my life if I am physically able to, and if I have paid off my financial debts to society. As I still have student loans, I was ineligible to make my own pilgrimage; but I had the wonderful opportunity to escort my aunt from India, as she had no male companion on this journey.

In her late 70s, she has terrible arthritis in her knees, and just before we left, she fell and fractured both wrists. Initially, it was a daunting task when I thought of the hot Saudi Arabian desert, the care involved for a loved one in a foreign land, and the performance of time-honored rites that involved circumambulating the Ka'ba (a cubical structure Muslims believe was made by Abraham), as well as rituals and prayers for forgiveness, and for the improvement in the circumstances of others. Luckily, I had my sister Safura to help.

These were long days. There was plenty of food around, but little time. How was I not hungry? Maybe it was the breakfast.

In the morning, I had some tomatoes and cucumbers. On them, I had some hummus and some "dried" yogurt (that's what they called it, but it looked like Greek yogurt to me). I had a lot of olives and some olive oil on it. I had some nuts. There was plenty of well water around (Genesis 21:19). And I was good to go.

I walked all day without significant difficulties. Perhaps the sun made me more thirsty than hungry. Perhaps the time to devotion had me pre-occupied. But I think it was also the nature of the breakfast, full of healthy oils, vegetables, and calcium.

Even now, back in Kansas City, when there is a busy day of rounding in the hospital or a clinic full of patients, I will have this Bedouin breakfast of olives, vegetables and healthy oils, and I am satisfied most of the day.

# Cardiac MRI: Revolutionary Technology for Imaging the Heart

By Ibrahim M. Saeed, M.D.

**T**he standard echocardiogram may allow one to see how well a heart moves. A nuclear stress test allows for assessment of blood flow and metabolism of heart muscle. A CT (or CAT) scan allows us to see structures of the heart and the arteries in detail. But a cardiac MRI (CMR) can obtain all of this information using one test that doesn't expose the patient to ionizing radiation (X-rays).

Case 1: A 64-year-old man came in with shortness of breath for three days. When I listened to his heart, he had a loud murmur suggesting turbulence in the heart. An echo showed us a leaky mitral valve. A cardiac catheterization showed us that the coronary arteries (those supplying the heart) were severely blocked.

I asked him if he ever had chest pain. He said, "No...never had any chest pain. But do you know what Doc? I had the worst reflux all night long about a week ago. I must've taken 20 Tums." It turns out that his "reflux" was really an unrecognized but potentially deadly heart attack.

A CMR scan was performed (see Figure 1 above). Few tests can show everything we see here. There is water surrounding the heart and the lungs that is due to heart failure; a leaky mitral valve, and an area of thinned heart muscle—the result of the patient's heart attack. This information allowed us to conclude that this man needs surgery.

Case 2: A 45-year-old man had three hours of chest pain before he came to seek medical attention. Figure 2, right, shows this man's heart, in a cross-sectional CMR format. In this view the left ventricle of the heart should look like a black

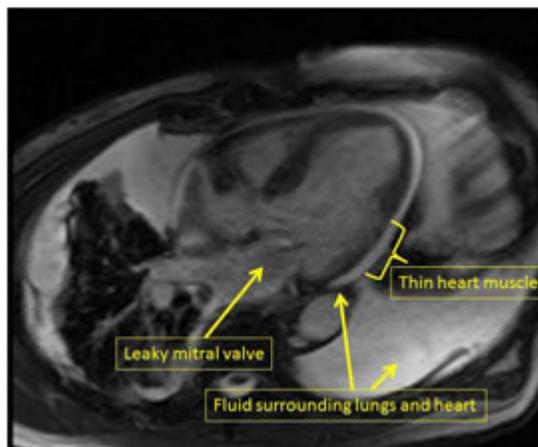


Figure 1

donut. This figure shows the true power of CMR – identifying disease at the tissue level. In this way, CMR can assess the extent of the heart muscle damage following a heart attack. This man's CMR scan shows the normal heart muscle as black, and the dead

heart muscle as white. The entire LAD artery was blocked, and although a stent was placed, it was too late to prevent the heart muscle in the region supplied by the blocked coronary artery from dying. The entire white section of this heart is dead. This test helps us decide future treatments with either medicines or procedures, and which complications might be more common following this large heart attack.

Cardiac MRI combines the visualization of wall motion as in echocardiography, metabolic activity as in a nuclear stress test, the anatomical details of a CT scan, but adds tissue pathology. It is allowing us to understand the nature of heart disease in a very comprehensive way to help our patients.

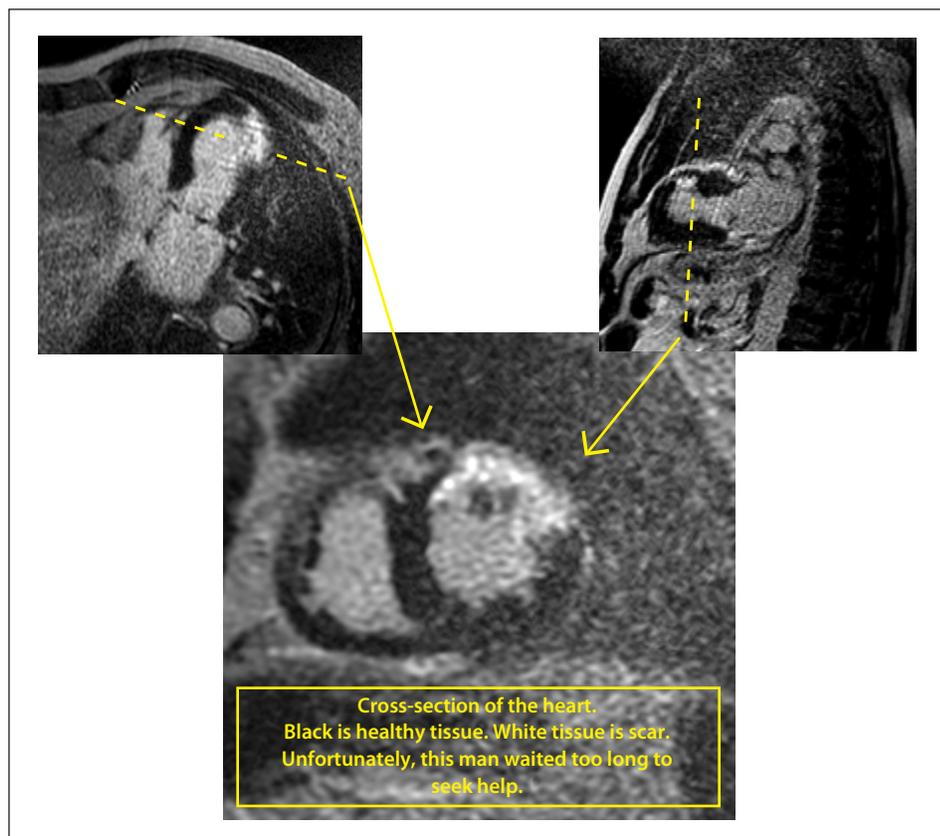


Figure 2

# 10 Commandments for Health, Happiness, and a Sexy Waist\*

**1** Pick a protein morning, noon, and night. Be sure to eat breakfast every morning.

**2** Pick at least two colors (vegetables and fruits) morning, noon, and night.

**3** Drink water, six to eight glasses daily (48 to 64 ounces). Other healthy beverages include: sparkling water, low-sodium V8® juice, skim milk, coconut milk, coffee, and tea. NO sweet beverages (no sweeteners, either natural or artificial).

**4** Do not eat or drink anything with added sugar. Also avoid grains; especially shun anything made with wheat, even whole wheat. If you are near your ideal weight, one daily serving of whole grain wild rice, quinoa, steel-cut oats, or pearled barley is acceptable.

**5** Adopt a pet; a dog that needs daily walking is perfect.

**6** If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Not more than one or two drinks daily.

**7** Exercise 30 to 50 minutes most days. Shoot for not less than 150 minutes of at least moderate exercise per week. Include weight lifting at least 20 to 30 minutes, two or three times weekly.

**8** Sleep seven and one-half to nine hours nightly.

**9** Take supplements of omega-3 (1,000 to 1,500 mg of EPA + DHA daily), and vitamin D3 (2,000 IU daily).

**10** Tap into the Power of Love. Put your family first. Commit long-term to your partner/significant other. Try to stay close, emotionally and physically, to your parents, children, grandparents, and siblings. Build and maintain a



social network that supports healthy behaviors such as exercise. Cultivate your spirituality and attend a faith-based service about once per week; denomination does not matter, whatever resonates best with your soul. Even a yoga class can count as spirituality time.

*\*An excerpt from Let Me Tell You a Story.*



## Everybody Dies, But Not Everybody Lives

**A** depressed 45-year-old man asked his doctor, "How long do you think I will live?" The doctor asked him, "Do you climb mountains, sky dive, or swim in the ocean?" The man answered, "No, I don't do anything risky." The doctor pressed him further. "Do you travel to exotic destinations?" "No, I never fly anywhere—too dangerous!" "Do you drink?" He responded, "No, I never touch the stuff." "Do you eat red meat or chocolate?" the doctor asked. "Never," the man said. Finally the physician asked, "Do you enjoy sex?" "Not much anymore," he said. So, the doctor looked at him, shrugged and said, "Well then, honestly, I don't see why you should even care how long you have left to live."

*"Life is short. Don't run so fast that you miss it." Raffaella Monne (a 107-year-old woman from Sardinia)*

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**James H. O'Keefe, Jr., M.D., Editor-in-Chief**  
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**Saint Luke's Cardiovascular Consultants**

4330 Wornall, Suite 2000  
 Kansas City, MO 64111

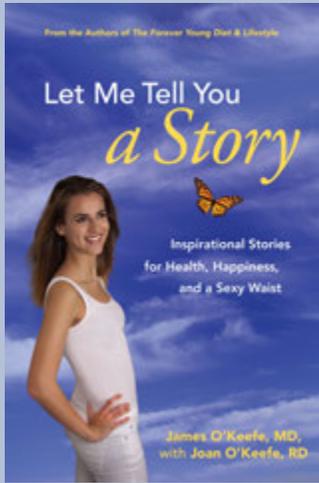
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The newest book from the O'Keefes is entitled, *Let Me Tell You a Story*. It's full of real-life inspirational stories and common sense advice that will do your heart good!

*Let Me Tell You a Story* is available everywhere print and eBooks are sold, including [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

*\*Any names of patients used in this newsletter have been changed to protect the privacy of these individuals, except in instances where they preferred that we use their real names.*

**PLAZA**

4330 Wornall,  
 Suite 2000  
 Kansas City, MO 64111  
 816-931-1883

**SOUTH**

12300 Metcalf,  
 Suite 280  
 Overland Park, KS 66213  
 816-931-1883

**NORTH**

5844 NW Barry Road,  
 Suite 230  
 Kansas City, MO 64154  
 816-931-1883

**LEE'S SUMMIT**

20 NE Saint Luke's Blvd.,  
 Suite 240  
 Lee's Summit, MO 64086  
 816-931-1883