

## Heart Disease

*By Raymond Francis*

Modern medicine ranks cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death, killing almost a million people per year. Yet heart disease used to be a rare disease, and it is almost entirely preventable and reversible—no one should have this disease. The heart is a pump, beating about 100,000 times a day, pushing blood through 60,000 miles of pipes (blood vessels). It is important to keep the pump in good operating condition and to keep the pipes clean and unobstructed. Mother Nature knows how to do this and do it well—it is we who screw it up by causing deficiency and toxicity.

The heart is a hardworking organ, and in order to function well, it requires large amounts of essential nutrients and energy daily. Since most Americans are nutrient deficient, this helps explain our epidemic of heart disease. For the most part, heart disease is a nutritional-deficiency disease, which is reasonably simple to prevent as well as reverse.

Unfortunately, most people and their physicians believe that high cholesterol causes heart disease—it *doesn't*. This is why half of all heart attacks occur in people with normal cholesterol. As a result of this myth, millions of Americans take toxic, health damaging, cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins. These drugs are taking a tragic toll on our health, causing everything from congestive heart failure to amnesia, muscle wasting, permanent nerve damage, immune suppression, cancer and depression. Yet all of this damage is for nothing. Studies show that statin drugs do not reduce the risk of dying of a heart attack. A study of stroke death showed that more people died who were on the drugs than those taking placebos. A similar study of heart disease in a 2001 *British Journal of Pharmacology* found that people who took statin drugs experienced no benefits regarding and had an overall death rate higher than those who took placebos.

The truth about cholesterol is this—it is only when cholesterol is oxidized that it becomes dangerous. Numerous studies have shown that if you prevent cholesterol from becoming oxidized, heart disease does not happen. What is important is to protect cholesterol from oxidation. Eating a non-inflammatory diet and taking antioxidant supplements will help to protect cholesterol from oxidation.

The cause of heart disease is—inflammation. The reason we have so much heart disease is that we eat a pro-inflammatory diet, rich in sugar, white flour, excessive omega-6 fatty acids and trans fats. In short, sugar, white flour and canola, soybean, peanut, safflower, sunflower, corn and hydrogenated oils are major causes of heart disease. If you care about your health, get these toxic foods out of your life! Not only do these toxic foods cause inflammation, they also result in excessive weight, and fat cells cause even more inflammation. This is why fat people have more disease, including heart disease.

What would happen if we were to cut out these toxic, pro-inflammatory foods, replace them with healthy foods and adopt a healthy lifestyle? Would you believe a 92 percent reduction in heart attacks? Well, that's what actually happened. A 2007 study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that adopting a healthy lifestyle of moderate exercise and not smoking combined with a good diet of fresh vegetables, fruit, whole grains, legumes and fish lowered the risk of heart attack by 92 percent—not shabby!

Since malnutrition plays such an important role in heart disease, it makes sense that nutritional supplementation with vitamins and minerals and especially antioxidants should be beneficial, which they are. A 2003 study in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that people who took multi-vitamins are at

substantially less risk than those who don't. Antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E have special importance and have been proven to be highly protective.

C-reactive protein (CRP) is a measure of the amount of inflammation in the body. Studies show that people with the highest levels of vitamin C have the lowest CRP. So it is not a surprise that a study of 85,000 nurses over a 16 year period, showed a significant reduction in heart attacks in those with the highest vitamin C intake, as reported in a 2003 *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

A study in a 2007 *Circulation* found that high-quality vitamin E significantly reduced the risk of blood clots that cause heart attacks and strokes. Another study in a 1996 *Lancet* found that supplementing with 400 to 800 IU per day of high-quality vitamin E reduced heart attacks by 77 percent.

A number of studies have demonstrated that supplementing with a combination of vitamins C and E, especially when combined with zinc, has a dramatic effect on reducing heart attacks and strokes.

Other nutrients that help to prevent heart disease include B vitamins, especially vitamins B6, B12 and folate. Each of these helps to lower homocysteine, a compound that damages arteries and is a risk factor for heart disease.

Coenzyme Q10 is a wise addition to a heart-healthy supplement program. CoQ10 helps cells to produce energy, and the heart has the greatest energy needs of any organ in the body. CoQ10 strengthens the heart, and it is important to know that cholesterol-lowering drugs interfere with the body's production of CoQ10. Some B vitamins work synergistically with CoQ10 to produce energy.

Omega-3 oils are another important supplement. Omega3s are found in flax oil and fish oil. They function as mild blood thinners and also improve the flexibility of blood vessels. Omega-3s also lower the risk of heart rhythm abnormalities (arrhythmias). A 2007 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that supplementing with 500 to 1000 mg of fish oil daily not only lowered the risk of irregular heartbeats but also lowered blood pressure, fasting glucose, blood triglycerides and /Body Mass Index (MBI).

Magnesium deficiency ranks high as a cause of heart disease, and about 3-out-of-4 Americans are magnesium deficient. Many studies have found a link between low magnesium and the risk of heart attack and stroke. Magnesium slightly thins the blood, but most importantly, it has a dramatic effect on reducing inflammation.

Flavonoids such as curcumin and quercetin perform a variety of beneficial effects including lowering CRP levels (a measure of inflammation), preventing blood platelets from sticking and forming clots, as well as lowering cholesterol.

Other things you can do to prevent heart disease include avoiding X-rays. X-rays cause inflammatory damage to tissues and contribute to heart disease. Even the inhalation of small particles contributes to heart disease. A 2008 study in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* found that filtering fine particles from indoor air for only two days resulted in improved blood circulation in small blood vessels. The researchers recommended HEPA filters for every home, most especially those near heavily-traveled roads.

Cardiovascular disease can be virtually eliminated by adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle. There is no reason to suffer a heart attack or stroke. These events are preventable and heart disease is reversible—and they are not caused by high cholesterol. All that is necessary is to get off the standard pro-

inflammatory diet that most Americans are on. This means avoiding the Big Four—sugar, white flour, processed oils, and dairy/excess animal protein. Eat a diet of fresh, organic, whole vegetables, fruits and other plant foods. Supplement with high-quality supplements. For most people, I recommend Beyond Health's Comprehensive and Cardiovascular Kits.

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