

## February 2012 Newsletter



Dave Anderson and Helen Raptis talked with Dr. Hassell about the whole food Mediterranean diet and heart disease on AM Northwest on KATU TV last week.

## Sugar and the heart

Evidence suggests that if you really want to demonstrate the depth of your devotion this Valentine's Day, send a bouquet of Brussels sprouts. At the rapid rate the world is waking up to the power of vegetables, you may be able to order them long-stemmed and nestled in a box. Your thoughtfulness will never be forgotten. (You'll have to cook them, of course, so we've provided a recipe further on.)

### Your sweet tooth may need extraction

Most people are aware of the relationship sugar has with diabetes, but there may not be enough awareness of its impact on heart disease. If you are someone who just wants the bottom line, here it is: **increased sugars and refined carbohydrates** are associated with an increased risk of heart disease and stroke, arguably to a far greater degree than are saturated fat<sup>1</sup> and dietary cholesterol.<sup>2</sup> "Sugars and refined carbohydrates" include the obvious players – candy, cookies, sweet drinks, and so on – as well as more subtle examples such as most breads, baked goods, white rice, pasta, fruit juice, sweetened fat-free yogurt, power bars, and just-add-milk whole grain breakfast cereals (see page 14 in *Good Food, Great Medicine*). These are foods with a high glycemic

load. Glycemic index and glycemic load are important because they tell us how much glucose your body can make from a food and how quickly your body can take it up. Studies show a strong relationship between foods with high glycemic loads and heart disease.

You may have heard us mention this in the past but we're going to say it again in case you haven't: A whole-food high-fat Mediterranean-style diet has the best health outcomes data of any diet studied so far. Simply by eating plenty of vegetables, whole fruit, beans, minimally processed whole grains, good fats, fish, and modest amounts of animal proteins, you are reducing your risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and dementia.

### The real bad boys of heart disease

Let's check out some data. One review<sup>3</sup> looked at the entire body of high-quality prospective studies dealing with diet and heart disease, and found only two dietary factors that clearly contribute to the risk of heart disease. These two factors were (1) **trans fats**, found in hydrogenated oils and an astounding number of packaged foods, and (2) **foods with a high glycemic index/glycemic load**, otherwise known as high-carbohydrate foods, including sugar. An Italian study with 47,749 participants had a similar finding for heart disease in women.<sup>4</sup>

There was also a review of studies involving 347,747 people followed for as long as 23 years to assess the effect of diet on heart disease risk. The reviewers concluded that "... dietary efforts to improve the increasing burden of (cardiovascular risk) should primarily emphasize the limitation of refined carbohydrate intake and a reduction in excess adiposity (fat)."<sup>5</sup>

A recent paper<sup>6</sup> focusing on high blood pressure found that sugar-sweetened drinks and sugars were associated with significantly higher blood pressure, a risk factor for heart attack and stroke.

<sup>1</sup> Siri-Tarino, P. et al. AJCN 2010;91:535-46

<sup>2</sup> Fernandez, M. Curr Atheroscler Rep 2010;12:377-83

<sup>3</sup> Mente, A. et al. Arch Intern Med 2009;169:659-69

<sup>4</sup> EPICOR, Sieri, S. et al. Arch Intern Med 2010;170:640-7

<sup>5</sup> Siri-Tarino, P. et al. AJCN 2010;91:502-9

<sup>6</sup> Brown, I. et al. Hypertension 2011;57:695-701

## **Think twice about that sandwich**

In fact, all products made with even 100% whole grain flour should be viewed with caution. The problem is that the tiny particle size of finely-ground commercial whole wheat flours tends to have a similar effect on blood sugar, insulin response, and obesity as white flour. This is why it is a good thing to keep the grains in your diet whole rather than ground. This is obviously more of an issue with those of us who are struggling with extra weight or diabetes. Pocket (pita) bread can help avoid conventional bread while creating a sandwich effect.

**DISCLAIMER:** Don't think for one moment that the preceding discussion on the subject of sugar and heart disease offers anyone the excuse to not buy their sweetheart a box of chocolates on Valentine's Day out of concern for their heart health! We can confidently say that there has never been a sudden onset of heart disease caused by a small box of chocolates on Valentine's Day.

## **Good Food, Great Medicine report**

We've just received our shipment of the eighth printing of the second edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Most of you who use the second edition will not notice any changes except for the updated medical references.

### **Research update**

Our esophagitis trial has been on hold for 2 months during research staff changes, and we are expecting to resume the study later this month. In this study we are using a mixture of yogurt, glutamine, and honey to reduce the discomfort associated with esophagitis related to chest radiation. As always, thanks to all of you who have supported this research project.

### **Do you get our e-newsletter?**

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## **Brussels Truffles (Roasted Brussels sprouts)**

Chocolates are so, well, predictable. Think out of the box! Brussels sprouts have a relatively small but passionate following, and you never know when someone is going to ask you to cook up a pound or so as a special Valentine's Day treat.

*(Serves 2, maybe 3, or possibly 4)*

### **Preheat oven to 450 degrees.**

- Select a pound or so of the freshest-looking Brussels sprouts you can find. Pull off loose outer leaves and trim the stem so it is almost flush with the base of the sprout.
- Cut sprouts in half through the stem. If there are any baby-sized sprouts, leave them whole – you want them to cook evenly. Place the sprouts in a bowl and toss with about 2 – 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil.
- Spread the Brussels sprouts in one layer in a sturdy foil-lined roasting pan. (Flimsy pans can seize in a hot oven and startle the sprouts.) The foil makes the clean up easy. Sprinkle each sprout with salt. (The salt is important!)
- Place sprouts in the oven to roast for about 20 - 30 minutes or until browned and luscious, shaking pan once or twice if you think of it. Allow the sprouts to get a bit crispy on the edges for the ultimate Valentine's Day effect.
- Eat freshly cooked. Irresistible with a side of *Rich Yogurt Aioli* (on page 98 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*).

## **Speaking Events**

**3/13/2012 – Grand Rounds:** Miles Hassell MD: *Preventing and Reversing Type 2 Diabetes: What are our patient's choices?* 8am, Souther Auditorium, Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland, Oregon.

**3/15/2012 – Making Your Way Through the Supplement Jungle: Vitamins, Minerals and Herbs:** Miles Hassell MD and Cindy Reuter ND, MSOM, L.Ac., RD Integrative Medicine Program, Providence Portland Medical Center, Portland, Oregon. *This talk is free.* Preregister at Providence Resource Line: 503.574.6595.

*"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*  
1 Thessalonians 5:21(KJV)