

July 2010 Newsletter



To hijack a quote from Samuel Johnson, “The possibility of losing one’s commercial drivers license doth wonderfully concentrate the mind.” Congratulations, Chuck!

When the right pressure counts

Chuck was faced with a blood pressure crisis this past April. He went to renew his Commercial Drivers License and his blood pressure was clocked at a frisky 186/100. This is high (normal is less than 135/85), and unless treated would certainly put him at a very high risk of heart attack, stroke, blindness, and kidney failure. What *really* got his attention, though, was the possibility that he might not get his license renewed.

Chuck isn’t one to go to a doctor without a really good reason, but this brought him into our office. He discussed his options with Dr. Hassell, and decided to hit his hypertension with everything he had.

First he started taking a small dose of blood pressure medication. Next he decided to stop smoking, and stuck to it. He began to make daily walking a habit. And – with the help of his wife – he got serious about his diet. He started including vegetables and whole fruits with each meal, and brought his own lunch to work. (For many of us, packing a lunch is a hugely important strategy for a successful diet makeover.)

Chuck reduced his refined carbohydrates, including sweets and breads, and did some serious work on portion control. Finally, he started taking a Vitamin D supplement.

In the first two weeks, his blood pressure dropped to 130’s/70’s and stayed there. Over the first two months, he lost 11 pounds and gained more energy, and also started sleeping better and snoring less.

Chuck got his license renewed, of course. At the same time, he made changes that dramatically improve his long term health and reduce his risk of premature heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or dementia. If he keeps up the good work, we expect that he will be able to stop his blood pressure medication soon. Congratulations, Chuck! Roll on!

Ways to lower blood pressure

Here are some steps to move blood pressure towards a target level of less than 135/85 with no more medication than necessary. (See Chapter 4 of *Good Food, Great Medicine, 2nd edition* for more info.)

- If you are overweight, ten pounds of weight loss can lower your risk of developing high blood pressure by 65 percent.
- Brisk walking for 30 - 45 minutes daily may lower blood pressure up to ten points.
- Keep alcohol to *no more than* one drink daily for women and two drinks daily for men.
- Those who are salt sensitive should watch salt intake. Simply avoiding prepared and packaged foods will reduce your salt intake. Also, a diet high in whole foods should include enough potassium to blunt the effects of excess sodium.¹
- The best-studied diet for lowering blood pressure is the DASH (Diet and Systolic Hypertension) diet.² To combine the benefits of a DASH diet with the Mediterranean diet, emphasize whole grains, beans, 5-9 servings of whole fruits and vegetables daily, 2-3 servings of low-fat dairy foods daily, raw nuts/seeds, fish at least twice a week, and small amounts of poultry and meat.

¹ Cook NR et al. Arch Int Med. 2009;169:32-40

² Ard, JD. J Clin Hypertens. 2000;2:387-91

■ Eat healthy oils such as extra-virgin olive oil (3 - 4 tablespoons daily),³ up to about an ounce of dark chocolate with at least 70 percent cocoa content. Take 1,000 IU Vitamin D daily, or one tablespoon cod liver oil.

■ Try the Resperate Device – a little FDA-approved gadget which apparently works by teaching you to alter the timing of your breathing slightly. Check out www.resperate.com.

■ Be aware of medications which may cause high blood pressure when used frequently, like most decongestants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) such as ibuprofen, and acetaminophen.

■ Try drinking three cups of hibiscus tea daily.⁴ (One source is *Celestial Seasoning's* Red Zinger.)

Rising temperatures, falling waistlines

Watching your waistline is your first line of defense against high blood pressure. Trouble is, summertime is full of waist control challenges. For one thing, there's the problem of summer clothes that don't fit winter waistlines that have hidden under layers for the past eight months or more. Then there's the food, the sneaky summer food that seduces. Everywhere you turn there are bowls of salted crunchy things, chilled liquid calories, and a relentless march of irresistible refined carbohydrates.

Our solution? Make sure there are plenty of tasty whole food options standing by. One of our favorite summer recipes is *Hasty, Tasty Hummus* (see recipe on the right), featuring garbanzo beans (chickpeas) and extra-virgin olive oil, and either served as a light dinner with whole wheat pita bread and *Greek Salad* (page 134 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 2nd edition), or as a dip with baby carrots, red and gold bell pepper slices, crisp cucumber rounds, broccoli and cauliflower florets, and celery sticks.

If you haven't found a hummus recipe you like, try this recipe. Dr. Hassell's son Tor doesn't care for store-bought hummus, but he loves this one. It is good chilled or at picnic temperature, but it's best eaten right after it's made – creamy, rich, and almost warm. Few recipes call for a respectable amount of garlic, but *this one does!* Make sure and eat it with consenting adults.

Check out our cookbook, *Good Food, Great Medicine*, for more ideas on what to bring to your next summer get together. Books are available on www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com as well as Amazon, Powell's, Annie Bloom's Bookstore, and Broadway Books.

Hasty, Tasty Hummus

(Makes about 2½ cups)

1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained
¼ cup lemon juice
¼ cup tahini (raw or roasted)
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon freshly crushed garlic
½ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ cup boiling water

1. Combine drained chickpeas and all the ingredients except the water in a food processor and blend until smooth.
2. With the processor running, pour in the boiling water. The texture should be thick but creamy and pourable. (It will thicken more in the refrigerator.)
3. Eat while freshly-made, if possible. Hummus keeps in the refrigerator for at least a week.

Note:

► Tahini is sesame seed paste, and you can usually find it in supermarkets as well as natural food stores. Store in the refrigerator.

Upcoming Speaking Events

7/6/2010 – NEXT Steps against Breast Cancer: Miles Hassell MD and Kenneth Weizer, ND: *Nutrition and Exercise Today to Reduce Risk and Improve Survival*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Cancer Center. This event is free. Preregister at the Providence Resource Line: (503) 574-6595.

7/30/2010 – Multnomah County Annual Adult Care Home Conference: Miles Hassell, MD: *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Health Care Crisis: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Portland, Oregon. *Conference attendees only.*

8/23/2010 – Critical Care Update: Miles Hassell, MD: *Which Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* *Conference attendees only.*

³ Ferrara. Arch Intern Med 2000;160:837-42

⁴ McKay DL. Journal of Nutrition.140(2):298-303, 2010 Feb

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"

1 Thess. 5:21 (KJV)