

## Take This to Heart

- There are so many fads and theories out there. Who do I listen to?

Don't look for miracle cures and be wary of folks who want to sell you their special brand of supplements, smoothie mixes, and/or foods. Listen to those who have been doing research and studying the results for years. These doctors are “practicing what they preach” into the third generation. They have pioneered the field of Lifestyle Medicine. They make recommendations from long-term documented studies and peer-reviewed results. Their lifestyle practices are KNOWN to not only prevent but to *reverse* many chronic diseases including **heart disease, type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer, high blood pressure, depression, high cholesterol, and weight gain**. Do I have your attention? Any of these experts can get you started; some have weekly podcasts, many are on YouTube. They have put together numerous cookbooks. Local libraries are well stocked with their books and cookbooks. Many have menus and shopping lists to kickstart a new way of eating. Some have even established retreats across the country teaching first-hand how to combat heart disease. (e.g. Plant Strong).

Dean Ornish, M.D.: His latest book, ***Undo It***, teaches about balancing 4 areas of one's life; eat well, move more, stress less, and love more. In this book, Dr. Ornish balances good heart health around more than just what we eat. We are social creatures and healthy relationships are key to longevity (Just ask those who live in “Blue Zones”).

T. Colin Campbell, PhD: He assembled findings from what's considered the most comprehensive research studying the relationship between diet and cardiovascular disease in his famous book, ***The China Study*** (Hmm, why is it that Chinese people hardly suffer from heart disease until they move to America?).

Joel Fuhrman, M.D.: In his book, ***Eat to Live***, Dr Fuhrman stresses the importance of a nutrient-rich diet (Pass the greens!).

Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr., M.D.: Dr. Esselstyn goes so far as to boldly title his best-selling book, ***Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease***. His son, Rip, a retired firefighter and world class athlete, managed to convert an entire firehouse to whole food, plant-based eating. He tells about that in his cookbook titled, ***The Engine 2 Diet***.

Michael Greger, M.D.: Dr. Greger's book, ***How Not to Die***, is a study of foods scientifically proven to aid in reversing and preventing disease. Find out the daily dozen foods he recommends in order to add years to one's life (Does an apple a day keep the doctor away?).

- **How about some motivational videos?**

**Forks Over Knives**. (2011) When someone has been diagnosed with heart disease and/or is motivated to make some lifestyle changes, I tell them to watch this video. It's free on Netflix. It usually stirs up inspiration.

**The Game Changers**. This came out last year, 2019. Jackie Chan and Arnold Schwarzenegger (yup, I had to look up how to spell that!) are among those who both star in and co-produced this movie. Invite some friends over and watch it together. Prepare yourself to be amazed. Again, it's on Netflix.

- **Are there some great websites?**

Yes, LOTS! Try these on for size:

[ornish.com/ornish-living/](http://ornish.com/ornish-living/) (Dr. Ornish) Health and nutrition tips and recipes.

[nutritionfacts.org](http://nutritionfacts.org) (Dr. Greger) Popular health and nutrition tips.

[dresselstyn.com](http://dresselstyn.com) (Dr. Esselstyn)

[nutritionstudies.org](http://nutritionstudies.org) (Dr. Campbell)

[forksoverknives.com](http://forksoverknives.com) Try their recipe service out for one week free.

[webmd.com](http://webmd.com) This site has informative health facts and quizzes.

[happycow.net](http://happycow.net) This site helps you find a meatless restaurant to try near you.

- **Do you know your numbers?**

**Cholesterol:** Total: under 200mg/dL      **Blood Pressure:** around 120 over 80  
HDL (good): 40-59 mg/dL  
LDL (bad): under 100 mg/dL  
Triglycerides: under 150mg/dL

- **Food Tips**

**Become a label reader.** Check the label for what is considered a serving size and know what your daily numbers should be for the "Big 3", fat, sodium, and sugar.

Goals based on a 2500 calorie/day diet:

**Fat-** less than 30% of daily calories, about 80gm/day

**Sodium-** less than 1500mg/day (1 teaspoon salt = 2,325mg sodium) Look out for places in which sodium hides out-especially in breads and processed foods. There are SOOO many no-salt seasonings to try.

**Sugar-** less than 37 gm/day for men (9 tsp), less than 25gm/day for women (6 tsp). Sugar with its many aliases, also shows up places one would not suspect.

**Avoid processed foods and added sugars.** Shop the periphery of the grocery store, where the food is sold in its original state. Frozen fruits and vegetables are a good option when they are out of season. If you purchase canned goods, choose low sodium options and rinse them well. **Treat meat, if you must have it, as a condiment.** Increase plant-based foods; decrease animal-based food (Yes, fish, yogurt, ice cream, and cheese are animal-based foods).

**All oils are about 120 calories per Tablespoon.** I’m not even going to touch the “healthy”, “unhealthy” oil debate. They are all oils. How many calories are you thoughtlessly throwing into that sauté pan every time you start a recipe with oil, onions and garlic? Next time, instead of oil, try vegetable broth, water, wine, or just sauté on lower heat and think of all the empty fat calories you are not ingesting needlessly. Become conscious of all the places you no longer need to add oil, use an alternative and you may notice the number on your scale start to decrease. Avocados and nuts are great nutritious fats. Try a non-oil salad dressing (Who knew they existed?!).

**Learn the Dirty Dozen and the Clean Fifteen** and try to buy organic at least for the Dirty Dozen. These lists are updated annually by the Environmental Working Group (EWG). The Dirty Dozen are considered to have the highest concentration of pesticide residue on them, and the Clean 15 generally have less residue. Always wash produce.

As of March 2023,

**Dirty Dozen:**

**Clean Fifteen:**

1. Strawberries	7. Sweet Bell Pepper	1. Corn	7. Papaya	13. Cantaloup
2. Apples	8. Nectarines	2. Onions	8. Mango	14. Sweet potato
3. Grapes	9. Cucumbers	3. Pineapple	9. Cabbage	15. Mushrooms
4. Celery	10. Potatoes	4. Avocado	10. Frozen sweet peas	
5. Peaches	11. Tomatoes	5. Cabbage	11. Kiwi	
6. Spinach	12. Hot Peppers	6. Frozen peas	12. Grapefruit	

**Think *whole* foods.** Aim to eat foods in their natural, unprocessed state, especially in terms of fiber content. For example, eat fruit instead of fruit juice. Eating *whole* foods helps cut back on saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar. If a packaged food item has a long ingredient list with hard-to-pronounce names, it’s probably a good idea to find another option.

- **What’s the best exercise for the heart?**

Corny but true; **the best exercise is the one you will do.** We are created to move. Our heart is a muscle. It is happiest and healthiest when it is exercised. A sedentary lifestyle, after all, is one of the top risk factors for heart disease. Sitting has been described as the new smoking. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of “heart-pumping” physical activity per week. Only about one in five adults and teens get this. Being active helps one feel,

think, and sleep better. Even if you purpose to sit less, it is an improvement. There are so many options: dancing, gardening, tennis, biking, swimming, hiking, Pilates, etc. My favorite: get outside with a friend and take a walk or hike (My dog nags me every morning until I get the leash. Good dog). The old saying, “Use it or lose it” really applies, especially as we age. I love my Fitbit Versa watch which tracks my daily steps and activity goals. There are even some fitness apps out there like “Achievement” that reward steps taken with \$cash\$. Be prepared to do a LOT of walking, though.

- **How do I stay motivated?**

**Everything is better with talking.** Find people who are like-minded, who want to care for their heart health. Talk about what has helped you and draw out others about what has helped them. It’s amazing how much people want to give away what they know. Share recipes. Start a new heart healthy log or recipe binder. I have made LOTS of bad recipes in order to find good ones (It’s like how Babe Ruth had to strike out many, many times in order to hit all his home runs! My meals don’t qualify to be made twice until it is approved by my Italian husband and 2 sons!)

**Start simple.** Don’t overwhelm yourself. If you blow it, it’s okay. Another opportunity to make a better choice is coming. Every step in the right direction is an improvement.

**Make Goals.** Try activity challenges among friends like the 150 minutes/week activity goal, or so many steps/day for a week. Make smaller changes that will lead to major changes over time. Start wherever you are at and set up a way to track progress. Progress is motivational! Find little ways to reward yourself when a goal is reached.

**Mended Hearts** is a great support group for getting around individuals who are motivated to care for their heart. We have experienced our hearts not functioning as we would like, and we want to improve our chances of not experiencing it again! We gather on the 2nd Thursday each month at 2:00pm at Timberline Baptist Church, 6628 Mullen Rd. SE, Lacey, WA. 98503. We bring in guest speakers from the cardiac profession. Together, we talk, and learn how to remain armed in the fight against heart disease. Mended Hearts members are prepared to help support you on your journey to better heart health through lifestyle changes. Having been a cardiac patient in the hospital bed is motivation to stay out of it!

**Disclosure:**

We have put these pages together as a courtesy to all those with whom we visit. We are asked regularly how to get started on a healthier heart journey. We were compelled to put something simple together that we could put into your hands. Many are overwhelmed when faced with the need to make changes for their heart health. The information included here is a compilation of what has **personally** helped us. Everyone is going to have their own variation of what they call “normal” and “healthy”. By all means, do your own research, ask questions, and empower yourself. We hope this instigates you to do so. **Most importantly, discuss lifestyle adjustments with your doctor!**