

# ANTI AGING PART 3: HAVING A HEALTHY HEART AND MORE

By Gary Null Ph.D.

## Heart Healing Foods

Cardiologist Dr. Stephen Sinatra says that too much insulin, insulin resistance, or ineffective insulin, not fats, causes heart disease. Dr. Sinatra's heart-healing nutritional approach, which he calls the Mediterranean diet, contains about 50 percent coarse carbohydrates with a low glycemic index, about 20 percent protein, and up to 30 percent healthy fat. Dr. Sinatra states, "The healthy fats I recommend are from fish and flaxseed. I have a phytoestrogen shake, which I recommend to both men and women in my practice, and which I take myself. It uses soy milk, which contains healthy fat, with ground-up flaxseed, which has a lot of omega 3's.

"In addition, it's high in phytoestrogens to help women going through menopause eliminate symptoms. These fats will prevent prostate cancer in men and ovarian cancer in women. I'll tell people to eat nuts, although peanuts do contain some rancid oils, and we have to be careful of that. But walnuts, chestnuts, even pistachios are okay. They contain a bit of saturated fat, but they're mostly monounsaturated. Walnuts are high in omega 3's. So, I'll tell people to eat these foods in addition to plant-based foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, and lean meats."

Specific foods in the Mediterranean diet include garlic, whose allicin and agoline are anti-inflammatory and onions, whose quercetin prevents the oxidation of LDL. Also important are spinach and collard greens as their lutine helps protect blood vessels and macular degeneration. Cabbage, broccoli, and kale contain calcium and phytonutrients for cancer prevention. Asparagus is rich in alphalinoleic acid, folic acid, and glutathione, an excellent free radical scavenger. Soy products have alphalinoleic acid, magnesium, calcium, and other plant nutrients that help with cholesterol. Miso, an Oriental soy product, is also good for heart health. Mackerel, sardine, salmon, and anchovies contain good-for-the-heart coenzyme Q10. Sardines also supply DMAE, an anti-aging hormone, which has been shown to improve memory. Legumes, like chickpeas and lentils, contain chromium picolinate for lowering blood sugar and triglyceride levels. Recommended fruits include grapefruits,

peaches, cherries, raspberries and kiwi. Eggs are excellent sources of amino acids, magnesium, and sulfur, and supply a lot of energy.

## Coenzyme Q10

Coenzyme Q10 (coQ10 for short) is an antioxidant vital to energy production. The substance is found in the mitochondria, the energy factories, of every cell, with particularly high concentrations in the heart, liver, kidney, and pancreas. CoQ10 declines with age, and research has linked this deficiency to age-related conditions, such as heart disease and Parkinson's disease. Low levels have also been related to cancer, muscular dystrophy, and periodontal disease.

In the 1950's, when scientists first began to notice that people with heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses had deficiencies in the coQ10, they began to wonder whether supplementation would make a difference. Since the substance was costly to extract, studies were not performed until the 1970's, when Japanese researchers discovered a way to produce coQ10 from an ingredient found in tobacco. Once its benefits were proven, coQ10 became one of the five top selling nutrients in Japan. Soon thereafter, the Life Extension Foundation, the Florida-based publisher of Life Extension magazine, introduced coQ10 to the American public, promoting it as essential for health and longevity. Jeffrey Laing, a contributor to Life Extension and co-author of *The Medical Advisor* and *The Complete Book of Health* and *The Complete Book of Health* reviews some of coQ10's many benefits.

"Evidence has found that coenzyme Q10 strengthens the heart muscle. Not only can it protect you from developing heart disease, it can alleviate your symptoms if you do develop cardiac problems and it may help you reduce your dependence on pharmaceuticals. One study, in Germany, found coenzyme Q10 to be a powerful natural antioxidant which can prevent cellular damage caused by heart disease. And more than 31 clinical trials in Japan alone have demonstrated the favorable effects of intravenous or oral coenzyme Q10 therapy in patients who have suffered heart failure.

"If those statistics sound impressive, consider the research that's been done on coq10 in cancer. A 44-year-old woman suffered from breast cancer which had spread to her liver. Doctors began giving the woman a daily dose of coQ10. Several months later, her liver tumors disappeared, and the cancer had not spread anywhere else in her body. The most

compelling cancer study to date was conducted at a private clinic in Denmark in 1994. Thirty-two patients with breast cancer were given a mixture of antioxidants, fatty acids, and 90 mg of coQ10. After a month, six of the women showed signs of partial remission so doctors increased the dosage, this time to 390 mg. A month later, one woman's tumor disappeared.

"Coq10 is not limited to treating heart disease and cancer. As researchers are discovering, it may hold the key to the treatment of a variety of other diseases as well. Double-blind studies, for example, show coQ10's effectiveness in treating muscular dystrophy. In one study, 12 patients were treated for three months with 100 mg of coQ10 and a placebo. The patients who took the coQ10 improved dramatically, but the placebo group continued to suffer progressive symptoms.

"Coq10 has also been used to treat periodontal disease. Researchers at Osaka University faculty of dentistry in Japan found that people with gum disease tend to have significantly low levels of coQ10 in the tissues of their gums. They gave eight patients with moderately or severely inflamed gums a regimen of coQ10 for about 8 weeks. Patients received no other therapy. The coQ10 therapy effectively suppressed the gingival inflammation in every case."

Additionally, Laing adds that coQ10 is important to take before surgery as studies indicate that people are far more likely to recover much more quickly and with less complications. Also, as a powerful antioxidant, coQ10 will slow down the aging process. People will look and feel younger. Between 100 and 300 mg daily are recommended.

Dr. Sinatra states that a good quality coQ10 will lower blood pressure when taken in sufficient quantities: "I will draw blood because a lot of these people are taking different drugs. But I find that if I get a decent blood level of coQ10, I can take away at least 50 percent of their drugs. Then I will combine coQ10 with hawthorn, and calcium/magnesium." Dr. Sinatra also takes a person's psychological state into account: "I refer people to my book Heartbreak and Heart Disease. I had a guy in my office, for example, who is doing everything right, but whose internalized anger is driving up his blood pressure. So, when you treat high blood pressure, you have to take a holistic approach, not just a physical one."

Lowering Homocysteine Levels

While much publicity has been given to cholesterol's role in heart disease, scientific evidence suggests an additional cause: elevation of the amino acid homocysteine. Dr. Kilmer McCully, a graduate of Harvard Medical School and the author of *The Homocysteine Revolution* discovered this connection while studying a rare genetic disease in children, homocysteinuria, 30 years ago. Dr. McCully found that the elevation of homocysteine in the blood damaged the tissues and cells of the arteries, despite normal cholesterol levels, causing arteriosclerosis over a period of months or years.

This relationship is implied in one recent study of 14,000 U.S. physicians, where elevated blood homocysteine is related to a three-fold risk of developing a heart attack in a five-year period as compared to those physicians with normal or low homocysteine levels, reports Dr. McCully. He adds that other studies show at least 10 percent of patients with heart disease having elevated homocysteine levels.

While high cholesterol levels may be involved, it is not necessarily the case. Dr. McCully states, "In the majority of cases of severe arteriosclerosis, as proven by autopsy studies, you will find that the cholesterol's in the normal range. In a study that I did here in our Providence veteran population, those veterans with the severest heart disease and arteriosclerosis had a mean cholesterol level of 186, which is well within the guidelines of the major agencies. So while it is true that if the cholesterol level is high that there is a statistically increased risk of heart disease, a normal cholesterol does not infer protection against the disease, as you can see from the study."

As people become older they are more likely to develop high homocysteine levels due to hormonal changes that take place in their bodies. Menopausal women, for example, are likely candidates. Others at risk include smokers; people with a poor diet, one high in processed foods and low in fruits and vegetables; those with a family history or a genetic predisposition to the condition; and individuals with a low thyroid hormone secretion.

Fortunately, homocysteine levels can usually be kept in check with three specific nutrients: vitamin B6, vitamin B12, and folic acid. While a good diet will supply these vitamins, diet alone may not be enough. Supplementation, in reasonable doses, is therefore suggested.

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